Slide 1   This presentation focuses on the texts used in Dynamic Learning Maps®, or DLM®, testlets assessing reading skills. The purpose of this presentation is to provide an overview of the design of these English language arts, or ELA, texts and how they are used in testlets.

Slide 2   Topics that will be covered during this presentation include an overview of ELA texts, text complexity, the development process of text used in testlets, text presentation in testlets, familiar texts that are a part of the DLM ELA assessment design, and common misconceptions around ELA testlets and texts.

Slide 3   ELA texts are written with careful attention to content, complexity, and fairness. There are two kinds of DLM texts. They are stories which are associated with reading literature Essential Elements and informational texts associated with reading information Essential Elements.

Slide 4   The texts used in the assessment are adapted from grade-level books commonly used by teachers. For each grade, the adapted texts, stories and informational texts, come from three main titles or source books. Some ELA Essential Elements at specific linkage levels are assessed using familiar texts. Familiar texts are texts that teachers should use during instruction and are listed and linked on the NY DLM webpage. Familiar texts will be covered in more detail later in this presentation.

Slide 5   How are the source books for adapted text selected? The selection of source books is driven by using grade-level reading selections supporting access to the general curriculum. To the greatest extent possible, efforts are made to provide a balance between male and female protagonists, as well as to represent a variety of cultures and perspectives. Additionally, during the review processes, texts are reviewed to be sure they are appropriate for delivery of assessment content.

Slide 6   The source books used at each grade are shown here. The approach for developing the grade-level stories to assess different linkage levels for different Essential Elements is to adapt episodes out of these books. So, stories for a third-grade student will be adapted texts from *Henry and Mudge*, *My Father's Dragon* and *Ramona Quimby, Age 8*. These stories developed from source books allow students who take DLM assessments access to the general education curriculum while meeting bias and sensitivity criteria.

Slide 7   The stories that have been adapted have some commonalities. Elements such as characters, settings and events found in the source books guide modifications made to the text for DLM reading passages. Additionally, story content design meets the following criteria: grade-level appropriate; reduction of the length, depth, breadth, and complexity for accessibility; and yields an appropriate assessment of the reading literature Essential Elements. Particular episodes from a source book may provide material for several different DLM stories.

Slide 8   Informational texts may be descriptive, explanatory, persuasive, or focused on compare and contrast, depending on the associated Essential Element and linkage level being assessed. They are written about nonfiction topics pertaining to the stories in the source book. For example, informational texts written using *The Birchbark House* as a source book may cover such topics taken from thematic elements such as family, animals, and elements of Ojibwe culture.

Slide 9   Next, we will review text complexity.

Slide 10   Text complexity is the degree to which a passage is easy or difficult to comprehend. Text complexity is comprised of multiple factors affecting all levels of a text and is dependent on an interaction between the text itself and the individual student's reading ability. Let's look at specific text characteristics that affect complexity.

Slide 11   Text characteristics affecting complexity include two, word-level factors. They are concreteness and length. For concrete versus abstract, we generally focus on concrete, so that when text is written, abstract words that may have multiple meanings are avoided. For the word-level factor of length, we tend to favor shorter words over longer words, so that less student effort is spent decoding the actual word and more effort is spent on engaging with the content of the text which is reflective of the Essential Element.

Slide 12   Sentence-level factors that affect complexity include syntactic complexity, negation words, passive voice, and pronouns.

Continuing, for syntactic complexity, DLM alternate assessments favor the use of simple sentences versus complex sentences, which could introduce dependent clauses. Attention to the length and structure of sentences is also important.

For negation words, such as not, never, or nobody, these terms are avoided, as is the use of passive voice.

Pronouns may be a source of interference for many students. The use of easily understood pronouns is preferred in order to reduce the level of confusion and time spent by a student attempting to resolve a pronoun and/or figuring out who it refers to in a story or text.

The goal here is to reduce cognitive interference so that the student's time and energy resources can be devoted to interacting with the item and to yield maximum information regarding their abilities.

Slide 13   There are two, text-level factors that affect complexity. They are coherence and content word overlap. Coherence is the use of sentences and paragraphs that are linked together to form a single meaning, or by using connectives. Content word overlap is the repeated use of words in adjacent sentences. For students who have limited attention or memory

resources, this allows them to access content in a way that they can then demonstrate their content knowledge.

Slide 14   As stated at the beginning of the topic, text complexity is comprised of multiple factors affecting all levels of a text and is dependent on an interaction between the text itself and the student's individual reading ability. This interaction is facilitated through strategic design by reducing complexity, using simple sentence structure, repetition, simple vocabulary, easily accessible pronouns and short texts. This allows for a decrease in the cognitive load to students, so that more complex questions can be asked reflecting the contextual richness in ELA. By reducing the complexity of text and cognitive load demands, the text will look very simple to fluent readers. However, this allows students to demonstrate some relatively complex tasks in ELA, such as making inferences and connections between ideas.

Slide 15   Before providing examples of how text components affecting complexity are incorporated into a DLM text, it is important to understand the assessment delivery. Texts within the DLM assessment are presented screen-by-screen on the computer. Though not shown here, students may use BACK and NEXT buttons in the testlet as needed while they are reading. This single-sentence screen is indicative of a text example at a Proximal Precursor level. An illustration is included; it is not necessary for understanding the words on the screen but does allow for student engagement. Items are not dependent on the illustration, as illustrations are not meant to explain words or to provide additional information. The focus here is to measure the understanding of the words and their meanings.

This is one testlet screen of a DLM text with the text "Trains move people and things." The sentence structure and vocabulary are simple.

Slide 16   How are these text components affecting complexity incorporated into a DLM text used in the assessment? The text "Trains run on tracks." has a simple sentence structure and simple vocabulary.

Slide 17   This is an example of a screen that has two sentences. These sentences are similar as they have the same subject, there are no pronouns, there is a repeated word from sentence to sentence, and there is a direct link between expressed ideas. The text looks very simple to fluent readers; however, by reducing the complexity of text and cognitive load demands, students will be able to demonstrate what they know and can do in relation to the skills and knowledge being assessed.

Slide 18   Next, we will review the text development process.

Slide 19   The development process includes multiple steps. These steps include the development of texts by DLM staff to support the assessment of nodes from the learning map model within the linkage levels. Once texts have been developed, they are reviewed both internally and externally before they are used for item writing. Criteria for both the internal and external reviews are established for content, accessibility, and bias and sensitivity.

Slide 20   Next, let's review the presentation of ELA texts.

Slide 21   As described previously, text is presented in a screen-by-screen format within ELA testlets and will contain one to three sentences and a photographic illustration.

The student will have the opportunity to read the text two times. In the first read, text will be read in its entirety, so that the student can devote energy to building a mental representation of that text. In the second read, text is read again with items embedded throughout or at the conclusion of the text. Item placement is determined by the knowledge, skills, and understanding in the learning map for the Essential Element being assessed. For example, a simple recall item about a character would be embedded immediately after the character does an action in the story. On the other hand, a linkage level assessing theme would be a concluding

item, as it requires understanding of the entirety of the text rather than a piece of it.

The reason for providing the first read and second read model is based upon cognitive literature supporting comprehension for developing and emerging readers. Item placement is determined in part with the alignment to the knowledge, skills, and understandings that are delineated in the learning maps and Essential Elements.

Slide 22   In the DLM alternate assessment, students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are given the opportunity to become familiar with the books they may encounter in the assessment.

Slide 23   Familiar texts are used for all Initial Precursor testlets and some other linkage levels. The use of familiar texts comes out of early and emergent literacy research that shows students are often able to do more complex mental activities in a familiar context than a novel context. Assessments at the Initial Precursor linkage level and some other lower linkage levels are not tests of reading comprehension, but rather of early and emergent literacy skills. The skills are loosely related to the text but are skills for assessment at those early literacy behaviors. Familiar texts are available for instruction using the shared reading technique prior to the administration of the assessment. Familiar texts are available on the DLM website. They can be used in instructional units and by students who are at high linkage levels for reading text that is grade-level appropriate. Next, we will illustrate how to navigate to the familiar texts on the DLM website.

Slide 24   To navigate to the familiar texts, follow these steps:
- Access the DLM website at www.dynamiclearningmaps.org.
- Once there, select New York from the For States tab.
- On the NY DLM webpage, apply the following Filters
- Role: Teacher
- Resource Category: Instructional Resources
- Content Area: English Language Arts
- Lastly, select DLM Familiar Texts for English Language Arts.

Slide 25   This is an example of grade 3 ELA source books. For the source book *Henry and Mudge*, Stories (RL) and Informational Texts (RI) are shown.

Slide 26   For teachers using familiar texts during instruction, the About Familiar Texts document is very useful in planning instruction. Each Essential Element with familiar texts at that grade is listed. Additionally, the document lists the particular familiar texts used on the assessment by linkage level for the Essential Element along with a summary of the text.

Slide 27   Here is a sample of the type of information in the About Familiar Texts document. For grade 3 ELA Essential Element EE.RL.3.1 at the Initial Precursor level, one of the four texts listed will be used for the assessment, and the teacher may use these texts for instruction. Selecting the highlighted link will take you to an illustrated book. The book may be read online, downloaded in PowerPoint form and presented or printed, or downloaded and read on an iPad.

Slide 28   DLM offers educators an instructional resource called "Anchor-Read-Apply," which assists in teaching students to comprehend text through listening or reading. Three learning modules are available that will help teachers learn to use the Anchor-Read-Apply resource, and additional documents (grade-level Anchor-Read-Apply Lesson Supports) offer specific lesson ideas linked to each of the DLM Essential Elements in Reading Literature (RL) and Reading Information (RI) Text.

Slide 29   Finally, we will review three common misconceptions and their explanations.

Slide 30   There is often confusion due to the misconception that the testlet questions should be related directly to the actual text. At lower linkage levels, items are focused on early cognitive and communication skills, not

reading comprehension. The text provides a context in which teacher-administered items can be delivered.

Slide 31   This second common misconception is due to the misunderstanding of our repeated reading model. As designed, all students are to read the text (or have it read to them) the first time as an engagement activity. Then, the second reading is undertaken with items appearing during the reading or at the conclusion. Students are allowed to navigate back and forth by using the BACK and NEXT buttons. Please note that when an item appears, it pertains to the content on the screen immediately preceding it.

Slide 32   The last common misconception that we will cover happens when a student has already read the text presented to them, creating the assumption that they have already taken the testlet. The explanation here is that unfamiliar texts are unique from familiar texts; however, the same unfamiliar text may be used for different Essential Elements and linkage levels. While this is infrequent, a student may receive two testlets that use the same text. However, the questions will be different.

Slide 33   We hope that this presentation on DLM ELA testlets has provided you with a deeper understanding of how texts used in the assessment have been developed to allow a student with severe cognitive disabilities to demonstrate what that student knows and can do at an appropriate complexity level, along with an awareness of the resources available for teachers to use during instruction. Please complete the short quiz that accompanies this presentation in order to receive a certificate of completion. Thank you.