

DOK Succession

Female Speaker: The Common Core Learning standards expect students to perform more cognitively demanding tasks, but how do you know that the tasks students complete meet these rigorous standards?

Webb's Depth of Knowledge, or DOK, is one way to measure the cognitive demands of tasks. By using four DOK levels that build in complexity, cognitive rigor looks at the DOK as well as the type of thinking required for students to interact with and respond to content. DOK1 elicits recall and reproduction.

DOK2 focuses on skills, concepts and basic reasoning. DOK3 expects strategic thinking and complex reasoning and DOK4 requires extended thinking. Depth of knowledge which is integrated with the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy in the Hess Cognitive Rigor Matrix is an important tool as schools begin to increase the rigor of curriculum maps, assessments and instructional practices to align to the Common Core. Rigorous instructional material should include a mixture of tasks from across DOK levels. In order to better understand increasing cognitive complexity, let's look at the succession of a social studies task from a DOK1 to a DOK4 using the same text. The text we'll be using is the Gettysburg Address.

Abraham Lincoln: Four score and seven years ago.

Female Speaker: The Common Core Learning Standards for literacy place the Gettysburg Address as a 9th to 10th grade text, so we will focus on the lining tasks to the requirements for this grade band. The following tasks aligned to the Common Core reading informational text standards 1, 2 and 6 for these grades. A sample DOK level 1 task for this text is – “What date is Lincoln referring to as ‘Four score and seven years ago’?” Although this task has a couple of steps, it is DOK 1 because it asked students to identify a footnote explaining that score equals 20 and then do a simple math word problem to calculate that the reference date is 1776. A DOK 2 question that builds off the previous task is what is the connection between the date, “Four score and seven years ago?” and the argument Lincoln is trying to make? This question is a DOK 2 because it asks students to identify the central idea and explain a relationship. The task asks students to determine the significance of the date mentioned. Then they must explain how this relates to Lincoln's main argument for preserving a nation formed on principles of freedom and equality. As we move on to DOK level 3 and 4 tasks, we notice that instead of one right answer, there are opportunities for multiple correct answers with justification and an explanation of reasoning. A DOK level 3 task for the Gettysburg Address might say Lincoln's address lays out a thesis and argument in support of equality. Analyze his line of reasoning and the evidence he uses to advance his point of view.

This is a DOK 3 task because it asks students to analyze the use of rhetoric as Lincoln relates the basis of equality during the founding of the United States to the fight to end slavery and the battles of the Civil War. A DOK level 4 task requires extended thinking and in-depth analysis most often seen in longer

term projects. For example, with this text a student might be asked to draw from additional related sources to write a research paper that discusses the role war plays in nation building. This task would require students to refine and deepen their understanding of nation as presented in Lincoln's speech and examine how conflict can shape and reshape national borders. It would also require students to analyze and synthesize information from various sources. This task's succession focuses on social studies examples but the basic principles apply across disciplines.

You can find more information about DOK and examples from different subject areas in the Common Core Library.