Product Research & Documentation
total motivation™ reading
Aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills (TEKS)
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In the United States, reading levels among the adult population appear to be low. According to the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (Kutner, Greenberg, Jin, Boyle, Hsu, & Dunleavy, 2007), statistics showed 14% of adults read prose texts at such a low level, indicating that only the most basic and concrete literacy skills are understood. It appears that only 13% read prose at the proficient level, demonstrating complex literacy activities. Proficient readers, as reported by the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, have declined 15% from 1992.

The percentage of adults in the United States reading literature declined from 54.0 in 1992 to 46.7 in 2002 (National Endowment for the Arts, 2004). The percentage of adults reading any book also dropped 7 percentage points. This low and declining achievement rate may be connected to a general lack of independent reading. Thus, a focus was placed on text complexity among the reading passages and their association with Lexile ranges. The text complexity of all passages within Total Motivation™ Reading were aligned to Lexile ranges so that the development of reading comprehension between and among the grades would lead students to read at the college and career readiness level by the time they graduated high school. The Lexile ranges for the passages within each grade level are 650L to 1130L for fifth grade, 630L to 950L for fourth grade, 510L to 910L for third grade, and 470L to 900L for second grade. Lexile analyzers are widely adopted measures of reading ability and text difficulty. These valuable tools help teachers determine the difficulty of a text and better match students to texts as well as predict whether students will be more likely to understand the text.

Research from the American College Test research report (ACT, 2006) confirmed that text complexity is important in reading achievement. Over the last fifty years, texts in K-12 grades seem to be less complex; yet higher education and the workforce have not lowered reading demands. In the last half of the century, the difficulty of college textbooks, as measured by Lexile scores, has not decreased but increased (Stenner, Koons, & Swartz, in press). College students are expected to read complex texts more independently and with little more scaffolding than in their K-12 education years. Studies report that reading in the workplace varies, but some Lexile measures show the text complexity levels exceed grade 12. The vocabulary difficulty of newspapers remained stable over the 1963–1991 years (Hayes, Wolfer, & Wolfe, 1996). With a decline in complexity of texts and a lack of reading of complex texts independently, the emphasis on reading comprehension and text complexity is essential and continues to rise in importance. Thus, the need existed for Total Motivation Reading to place emphasis on text complexity. The high-quality passages provide the appropriate level of text complexity and engage students in topics related to science, social studies, fine arts, and technology.

Reports from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2003) indicated that 38% of fourth graders cannot read well enough to grasp meaning from a basic children's book. With scientifically based approaches to reading, students with reading or language problems, attention or learning deficits, or those with a reading disability or with limited English speaking abilities risk their performances lagging behind those of their peers. Chall (2000) noted that research findings are not always widely accepted. Practitioners do not always readily transfer findings into classroom practices. It is imperative that educators and others appreciate, recognize, agree upon, and implement pertinent research findings that are scientifically based. Educators must seek to optimize learning opportunities for students validated by research. Students are expected to independently read some unfamiliar texts, relying...
on the print and drawing meaning from it. Total Motivation Reading seeks to provide a resource that supports the concept of “reading to learn.”

Total Motivation Reading is a comprehensive, rigorous, and relevant supplemental reading resource developed by Texas educators to integrate critical and focused reinforcement into reading instruction. Total Motivation Reading addresses all Readiness and Supporting student expectations of the English Language Arts/Reading Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (ELA/R TEKS) and is designed to develop and improve students’ reading comprehension and critical analysis of text. With a unique emphasis on critical thinking in the classroom, students are empowered to extend and apply learning beyond the classroom.

Total Motivation Reading units are aligned with the STAAR™ Reporting Categories as outlined on the Assessed Curriculum Document prepared by the Texas Education Agency (2010). This resource also aligns with the STAAR® Blueprint (TEA, 2010) as it includes activities or questions that prepare students for the Readiness TEKS (60-70%). An emphasis is also placed on questions or tasks that reinforce the Supporting TEKS (30-40%). The rigor, depth, and level of cognitive complexity will increase in order to measure a greater range of student achievement and to better link the results to college and career readiness and success. Students must display a beyond literal understanding of texts as they exhibit critical and inferential skills. Students must also show sufficient skill in forming connections within and across texts, using evidence to justify or form conclusions and make real-life applications. Each unit includes components that represent the STAAR® requirements of developing rigor and complexity of thought in order to move students forward in mastering the existing Reading Standards. The development of the unit contents were based on STAAR® Blueprints (2011), Test Design Schematics (2010), Released Test Questions (2012), ELA/R TEKS eligible for testing (2011), Reading PowerPoint shared by Young (2015), and other assessment curriculum documents found on the Texas Education Agency website. Updates for Reading assessments presented at Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA) and Coalition of Reading and English Supervisors of Texas (CREST) conferences were also considered while developing Total Motivation Reading.

Student data from the Spring 2016 STAAR® Reading Summary Report (TEA, 2016) demonstrated a range of scores for students in grades three through five. The total number of third grade students tested was 357,320. The released data from each of the three reporting categories yielded the following results for the All Students summary. For the category Understanding/Analysis Across Genres, third graders answered 69% of items correctly or an average of 4.1 items out of 6; for Understanding/Analysis of Literary Texts category, third graders answered 68% of items correctly or an average of 12.2 items out of 18; for Understanding/Analysis of Informational Texts third graders answered 63% of items correctly or an average of 10.0 items out of 16. The total number of fourth grade students tested was 353,370. The released data from the three reporting categories yielded the following results for the All Students summary. For the category Understanding/Analysis Across Genres, fourth graders answered 75% of items correctly or an average of 7.5 items out of 10; for Understanding/Analysis of Literary Texts, fourth graders answered 67% of items correctly or an average of 12.0 items out of 18; for Understanding/Analysis of Informational Texts, fourth graders answered 65% of items correctly or an average of 10.4 items out of 16. The total number of fifth grade students tested was 359,130. The released data from each of the three reporting categories yielded the following results for fifth graders in the All Students summary. For the category Understanding/Analysis Across Genres, fifth graders answered 71% of items correctly or an average of 7.1 items out of 10; for Understanding/Analysis of Literary Texts, fifth graders answered 70% of items correctly or an average of 13.2 items out of 19; for Understand-
Several reasons might account for the lower range results. The following reasons indicate most likely why students answered in the lower range: Literary texts may be more difficult to analyze, infer, and think differently about as most all questions go beyond literal understanding. Also, students must understand how the writer’s craft affects the meaning, and how to use text evidence to confirm the validity of their ideas. As evidenced by these results, there appears to be a need for quality resources that support the implementation of reading skills and show a strong potential for improving outcomes for students with or without reading difficulties. Total Motivation Reading provides an essential framework that offers all students exposure to literary and informational texts that encourage narrow and deep thinking, and opportunities to make connections within and across texts, a variety of levels of questions so that students must think more critically and inferentially about a variety of genres as well as about using context to interpret vocabulary and determine word meaning. Total Motivation Reading offers instructional support in the form of formative assessment opportunities for targeted TEKS within passages that reflect literary and informational genres.

Total Motivation Reading incorporates research-based strategies and pedagogically sound principles for teaching and learning. This product is designed to support and enhance best practices for incorporating the standards into student instruction. Total Motivation Reading is founded on the modeling of active teaching, which is teacher-directed instruction that proceeds in small steps. Active instruction includes a wide range of instructional approaches: small groups, class discussion, concrete objects, hands-on experiences, reading, and writing. In Total Motivation Reading, teachers can ask students to think aloud, consider different options for responses, show evidence for the response...
reached, and put their thoughts in writing. All of these ways help students to organize their thinking and assist teachers in determining the level of understanding of reading concepts. Studies have indicated that instruction which emphasizes active student engagement in hands-on opportunities improves attitudes toward learning and indicates a positive effect on achievement. Research has also shown that the active teaching approach is associated with higher levels of student achievement. Throughout Total Motivation Reading, student engagement is invited in numerous ways. Students are guided through the learning process and are afforded opportunities for success, which include: Reading Passage, Assessment, Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, and Homework with Parent Activities.

The National Reading Panel (2000) identified comprehension of text as critical to reading successfully. This panel pointed out a series of strategies that influence the meaning of text. The Teacher Edition of Total Motivation Reading will delineate strategies that students can use independently as they read. Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) stated that when students learn and apply such strategies, their comprehension improves. Without comprehension, teachers and students become frustrated when students can read words but only have a surface understanding of the printed word. With the absence of comprehension, reading for pleasure and knowledge appears to be virtually impossible (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004). The questions and instructional activities at the end of each unit accent specific skills and provide practice designed to challenge students and address elements of reading comprehension. Reading comprehension skills include applying one's prior knowledge and experiences to the text, understanding vocabulary and other concepts, linking ideas, recognizing the author's purpose, distinguishing between facts and opinions, and making inferences or drawing reasonable conclusions. Poor readers cannot actively process text. Teaching students to use strategies that target the aforementioned skills or the individual difficulties they encounter can increase comprehension (Gersten, Fuch, Williams, & Baker, 2001; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997; Swanson, 1999). Strategy instruction seems to consistently improve the abilities of students to see relationships in reading selections and to grasp meaning while actively engaging students. Explicit and systematic instruction is linked closely with improved outcomes in reading comprehension. Thus, learning experiences must entail participation from both students and teacher, determine what students need, and should adapt to meet the needs of each learner in order to progress in reading.

Total Motivation Reading is not a reading approach but a supplement to reading for grade levels one through eight. This product provides students with practice in components essential to learning: repeated practice, assessment, critical thinking, creative thinking, homework, and parent activities. This product contains reading passages that reflect a variety of genres incorporating literary or informational selections. Each selection will include questions that measure or assess the comprehension of students toward the passage. Critical thinking questions, based on Bloom’s Taxonomy, are offered to help students derive meaning from texts using lower- and higher-order thinking questions. A creative thinking activity is provided within each unit to stimulate the mind by connecting an element of the passage in an engaging, productive manner. Homework for Levels 2-5 is provided through a paragraph which follows each passage and parallels some aspect of the passage, coupled with questions that assess the comprehension of that paragraph. In Levels 6-8, the Writing Connection provides opportunities for students to apply the writing process to create planning tools, as well as to compose a variety of pieces, including personal narrative, expository essay, persuasive letter, and narrative poem. The purpose is to encourage students to observe the natural relationship between reading and writing. All of these activities provide practice to extend the learning of
each reading passage and to reinforce selected ELA/R TEKS. Parent activities are suggested to promote home-school connections and engage parents in the learning of their children.

Adams (1990) advocated for the need for practice in reading. Furthermore, the exposure to many reading materials could reinforce vocabulary learning and provide motivating reading materials that would interest students. Chall (2000) also noted the need to provide children with the practice in reading that would provide challenging reading material in addition to texts. These supplemental materials would enable students to practice skills they had acquired. A review of literature reveals a strong correlation between children’s academic engaged time and growth in achievement.

Vaughn and Linan-Thompson (2004) indicated that sometimes teachers pose questions to students and those students who respond in a reasonable manner achieve. Such students are regarded as those making adequate progress. Those who do not respond correctly or completely are then given answers or just provided cues leading these students to the specific answers sought. Students may or may not understand the text but both of these situations appear to satisfy some teachers. However, the best approach to ensuring comprehension of text is to directly and explicitly teach comprehension strategies. Studies during the late 70s by Durkin revealed a minimum amount of minutes that should be dedicated toward the direct instruction of comprehension. Studies have continued to show that comprehension is not being taught as often as it should be (Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997; Schumm, Moody, & Vaughn, 2000). Total Motivation Reading provides a supplement for the teacher to apply the taught comprehension strategies and an opportunity to check the progress of students toward identified standards or skills.

With the emphasis on district and state level reading assessments, the purpose for teaching comprehension strategies to students is of dire necessity. Every state is required by law to show evidence of student progress in reading. Vaughn and Linan-Thompson (2004) noted that gains will surface in the assessments of students’ progress if teachers will provide systematic and explicit comprehension instruction. Cunningham (1998) agreed with the importance of teaching comprehension strategies. Although she noted that teachers may ask questions after the reading of a text, modeling how to answer the questions does not occur often enough. Teachers appear to confuse asking questions with teaching. Teachers also assign tasks with questions to be answered by the students yet they fail to demonstrate how to answer written questions which is also the teaching of comprehension strategies that skilled readers use.

The experiences, discussions, and review of the literature convinced the Mentoring Minds Product Development Team that quality supplemental resources for reading practice were needed. Thus, the format for a Student Edition was designed to help move reading practice and assessment forward so that teachers could incorporate standards-based teaching on a higher level and develop within students the confidence they need to succeed. Developed by Texas educators, Total Motivation Reading provides extensive supplemental reading practice for all student expectations in grades two through five in Spanish and in English. The Student Edition for each level contains twenty-five reading passages, with paired selections as an integral component of the fourth- and fifth-grade levels. Each level reflects a diversity of literary or informational passages related to curricular content in science, social studies, music, and art.
Every unit for Levels 2-5 features a reading passage, assessment practice, critical thinking questions, creative thinking activities, a homework/parent activity page, Word Study (Level 1), and Writing Connection (Levels 6-8). Effective teaching literature indicates that students need to be given both an opportunity to discover and invent new knowledge and an opportunity to practice what they have learned to improve student achievement. Teachers must ensure that ample opportunities are provided for students to learn important skills in reading. A specific focus must accentuate all targeted skills on a regular basis. Therefore, time must be built into the schedule for instructional opportunities. Evidence from research demonstrates that a successful instructional program must include time for students to practice what they are learning and experiences to perform the tasks for which they are to demonstrate competence. A positive relationship between total time allocated to instruction and general student performance exists. Total Motivation Reading is an educational tool that enables students to practice what they are learning.

Assessment plays a critical role in all aspects of teaching and learning. The need for higher-quality assessments is well established. Studies have shown that teachers spend as much as one-third to one-half of their time involved in assessment-related activities (Stiggins & Conklin, 1992). For instruction to be effective, classroom assessments must reflect quality. Evaluative tools, which closely align with the objectives, are usually more beneficial for diagnosing and revising instructional needs. With the passing of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), federal law now requires that academic assessments for “math and reading or language arts be administered annually in grades 3-8 and at least once in grades 9-12...” (Mandlawitz, 2016, p.1). The critical issue of accountability will continue with ESSA, but assessments will be used to help improve schools and inform instruction. The law allows the state and local levels the opportunity to create systems for accountability, resources, interventions and teacher evaluation systems.

The federal requirements of Every Student Succeeds Act mandate that all students participate in the state assessment program. Therefore, assessment is interwoven into each unit from whence the teacher can gather timely student information to readily and continuously maintain accountability for academic achievement standards. Total Motivation Reading provides supplemental reading passages that contain a variety of multiple-choice, open-ended, and short-answer questions to provide practice and measure comprehension of literary and informational texts. Therefore, there exists a critical need to improve reading instruction and address the accountability outlined in the specific plans that the legislation requires each state and local district to develop. As the issue of accountability continues to prevail across our nation, student achievement will always be a priority. Test scores are one way to measure success, but not an end unto itself. The scores are like a barometer that measures the success of the educational environment of a school or that of a district. Juel (1988) stated that the ability to read well is necessary for academic success and that still is true today. The goal is for educators to use scientifically based practices to improve their knowledge and improve their effectiveness toward reading instruction. Novice and veteran teachers can enhance their instructional delivery to lead students in becoming proficient lifelong readers.

Total Motivation Reading also offers Performance Task Assessment which are used to evaluate student learning. The task itself relates to the unit topic and allows students to demonstrate the ability to think and reason while using higher-order thinking skills. The task requires students to create a product that integrates multiple TEKS using research, writing, and speaking within real-world contexts. Scoring guides or rubrics are used to measure student responses. Research shows that when teachers use performance-based tasks, their instructional practices began to align more with best practices (Vogler, 2002). Evidence-based practices must be embedded in our instruction to guide students to
improved performance. According to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (Fadel, Honey, & Pasnik, 2007, p. 34), the workplace will require “new ways to get work done, solve problems, or create new knowledge”—the assessment of students will need to be largely performance based so that students can show how well they are able to apply content knowledge to critical thinking, problem solving, and analytical tasks throughout their education. Hess advocates that students must be able think deeply—to process information analytically, to independently draw inferences and reach conclusions, and to solve problems.

Teachers must view assessment as an integral and natural component of the instructional process. Formative and summative assessment results should inform instruction. Formative assessments are information-gathering activities that take place during the actual teaching of concepts or skills. Summative assessments are administered to students periodically to determine what students have learned (National Research Council, 2001). Formative and summative assessments work together to form a complete picture of student performance and are essential in providing a balanced approach for assessing student achievement. Teachers cannot wait to assess students using summative test results. Assessments must be ongoing and skillfully used. Based on many studies, Black and Wiliam (1998) noted that significant gains can result due to formative assessment. Other researchers confirmed the finding that formative assessment has a positive impact on learning (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2004; Primo and Furtqak, 2006). When students know their learning targets and receive descriptive feedback in relation to the targets, then they are aware of what they need to do or what steps to take to improve. Engaging students in self-assessment is a powerful element in increasing student performance. The Chart Your Success chart in Total Motivation Reading involves students in shared responsibility for assessment, and the formative assessment opportunities provide teachers with ongoing data to inform instruction and provide one vehicle from which regular, descriptive feedback can be provided to students. This chart is included at all levels and is located in the back of each Student Edition on which students can visually record, observe, and monitor individual progress on an ongoing basis.

The involvement of students in assessment promotes student engagement in individual learning targets and develops student accountability as they monitor and measure learning. Students need to know what learning targets they are responsible for mastering, and at what level. Marzano (2005) stated, “students who can identify what they are learning significantly outscore those who cannot.” This self-assessment opportunity promotes practices that are crucial to independent learning. Research on formative assessment has suggested that students should be aware of their learning target, their present status, and the next steps in reaching that goal or closing any gaps (Atkin, Black, & Coffey, 2001). Such knowledge helps students keep track of their achievements, know how close they are to their learning targets, and determine future steps to advance their learning. When students are aware of their achievement gaps and teachers motivate students with continuous feedback linked to the expected outcomes and criteria for success, students are able to surge ahead and close performance gaps in the ELA/R TEKS. Black and Wiliam (1998) noted that there is evidence to support a strong relationship between interactive feedback and student achievement.

Teachers have to assess the subject matter accurately so accurate information can be collected about student achievement. Assessment results
help educators make sound decisions for the purpose of improving student achievement. Most teachers are unprepared to meet the assessment challenges they face today. Licensure does not state that teachers have to show assessment competence, yet much of their time is spent in assessment-related activities (Stiggins & Conklin, 1992; Trevisan, 1999). Teachers must have help in accurate assessment. Mentoring Minds sought to develop a product to assist in the practice of reading skills and the assessment of teaching and learning. Assessment of incorrect and correct answers to questions for each reading unit will be charted by each student to maintain accurate and useful data. By observing the students’ Chart Your Success charts, teachers and students can determine individual strengths and weaknesses. In the Teacher Edition, the TEKS Frequency chart lists the reading skills that correlate to the Total Motivation Reading Student Edition passages and test questions. Through utilization of this chart and using the data from the students’ chart, specific areas could be identified where students need additional practice in mastering skills before participation in an actual state assessment. Reading data informs educators about their students as readers. Once data is retrieved, deciding how to organize it is vital so that better instructional decisions can be made.

A study of student data allows for individualization of instruction to meet the needs of students.

Studies have supported the use of a variety of measures to gauge student achievement. Due to accountability issues, Mentoring Minds encourages teachers to maintain accurate and useful data records as well as to employ a variety of assessment measures to form a more valid insight on where a campus, a classroom, or a student stands in mastery of reading performance standards. Following each main reading passage in the Student Edition are sections entitled Critical Thinking and Creative Thinking. Six critical thinking questions, one for each level of Bloom’s Taxonomy, are provided to stimulate students to think about the passage(s) read. The Creative Thinking page contains an inspirational message. Interdisciplinary creative thinking activities are presented under the Motivation Station heading and range in variety from word puzzles, art activities, map skills, to figurative language. This section offers students engaging and rigorous, independent thinking opportunities with which to practice or apply reading skills and concepts. Therefore, Total Motivation Reading reflects formative assessments mingled with interactive student/teacher conversation. Data from the Assessment page used in conjunction with other measures from the Student and Teacher Editions provide crucial information for the teacher in improving performance relating to the ELA/R TEKS.

A writing activity in the format of a journal entry always concludes the creative thinking section. Students must learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas. Journal prompts are an important element in each unit for the purpose of incorporating writing into reading. Journal prompts are used within each unit in the Student Edition to provide authentic writing opportunities and, as promoted by research, serve as a valuable instructional learning experience for concept application to real-world settings. Prompts or questions are used to compose original responses that integrate student writing skills with reading based on upper levels of critical thinking. This writing prompt invites students to apply a concept from the text selection to their own lives, thus making real-world connections. Literary concept prompts allow students to reflect and communicate their knowledge as they integrate reading and writing as required by the ELA/R TEKS. The journal prompts in Total Motivation Reading serve as another formative assessment opportunity for students to express their thoughts and reasoning abilities as they transfer concepts across the disciplines and to everyday life.

Research indicates that thinking skills instruction makes a positive difference in the achievement levels of students. Thinking skills involve two modes of thinking: critical and creative thinking. An essential goal in education is to assist
students in learning how to think in a productive manner. Authorities in the field of thinking indicate both creative and critical thinking lead to a “well-rounded” thinker (Cotton, 1991; Hillis & Puccio, 1999; Paul 1995). Studies that reflect achievement over time show that learning gains can be accelerated. These results indicate that the teaching of thinking skills can enhance the academic achievement of participating students (Bass & Perkins, 1984; Bransford, 1986; Freseman, 1990; Kagan, 1988; Matthews, 1989; Nickerson, 1984). Critical thinking is a complex activity and we should not expect that one method of instruction would prove sufficient for developing each of its component parts. Carr (1990) acknowledged that we have learned that while it is possible to teach critical and creative thinking and its components as separate skills, they are developed and used best when learned in connection with content knowledge. To develop competency in critical thinking, students must use these skills across the disciplines or the skills could simply decline and disappear. Torrance (1972) examined the extent to which creative thinking could be taught. The culmination of his research showed that creative thinking could be enhanced. Torrance indicated that Creative Problem Solving (CPS) was a widely accepted model of teaching creative thinking. Total Motivation Reading allows students opportunities to apply their thinking using creative and critical thinking avenues. Teachers should expect students to use thinking skills in every class and evaluate their skills accordingly. Hummel and Huit (1994) stated, “What you measure is what you get.”

Critical thinking is an important issue in education today. Attention is focused on quality thinking as an important element of life success (Hess, 2016; Huit, 1998; Stobaugh, 2013; Thomas & Smoot, 1994). In the 1950s, Bloom found that 95% of the test questions developed to assess learning required students to only think at the lowest level of learning, the recall of information. Similar findings indicated an overemphasis on lower-level questions and activities with little emphasis on the development of students’ thinking skills (Risner, Skeel, & Nicholson, 1992). As Gough (1991) pointed out, “Perhaps most importantly in today’s information age, thinking skills are viewed as crucial for educated persons to cope with a rapidly changing world. Many educators believe that specific knowledge will not be as important as tomorrow’s workers and citizens as the ability to learn and make sense of new information.” Hobgood, Thibault, and Walberg (2005) argued that, “Now, a considerable amount of attention is given to students’ abilities to think critically about what they do.” It is imperative for students to communicate their thinking coherently and clearly to peers, teachers, and others.

It is crucial to invite students to explain their thought processes. If the results are inaccurate, teachers can identify the precise point at which students deviated from using critical thinking. Thus, teachers must purposely promote critical thinking as part of the learning experiences that align with the English Language Arts/Reading TEKS. The literature has noted that when students use their critical thinking abilities integrated with content instruction, depth of knowledge can result. Teachers are encouraged to refrain from limiting instruction to lectures, rote memorization, and other strategies that exercise only lower levels of thought as opposed to incorporating those that build conceptual understanding (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).

The ability to engage in careful, reflective thought is viewed in education as paramount. Teaching students to become skilled thinkers is a goal of education. Students must be able to acquire and process information since the world is changing so quickly. Some studies have reported that students exhibit an insufficient level of skill in criti-
cal or creative thinking. In his review of research on critical thinking, Norris (1985) surmised that students’ critical thinking abilities are not widespread. Most students do not score well on tests that measure ability to recognize assumptions, evaluate controversy, and scrutinize inferences.

Students are not likely to develop these complex skills or to improve their critical thinking abilities if educators fail to establish definite expectations and measure those expectations with some type of assessment. Assessments (e.g., tests, demonstrations, exercises, panel discussions) that target higher-level thinking skills could more than likely lead teachers to teach content at those levels, and students, according to Redfield and Rousseau (1981), to perform at those levels. Students not only need to know an enormous amount of facts, concepts, and principles, but they also must be able to effectively think about this knowledge in a variety of increasingly complex ways. If test items are used that only require lower-level thinking skills such as knowledge and comprehension, students will not develop and use their higher-order skills even if instructional methods that employ these skills are implemented. Individuals do not do what is expected, only what is inspected.

Solving problems in the real world and making worthwhile decisions is valued in our rapidly changing environment today. Paul (1985) pointed out, “thinking is not driven by answers but by questions.” The driving forces in the thinking process are the questions. When a student needs to think through an idea or issue or to rethink anything, questions must be asked to stimulate thought. When answers are given, sometimes thinking stops completely. When an answer generates another question, then thought continues. Paul ascertained that students who ask quality questions are really thinking and learning.

As Cardellichiio and Field (1997) pointed out, “Multiple forms of student engagement exist when high-level thinking is fostered. Examples of engagement include collaborative group activities, problem-solving experiences, open-ended questions that encourage divergent thinking, activities that promote the multiple intelligences and recognize learning styles, and activities in which both genders participate freely. Brain researchers suggest that teachers use a variety of higher-order questions in a supportive environment to strengthen the brain.” Ó Murchú further explained, “Meaningful learning requires teachers change their role from sage to guide, from giver to collaborator, from instructor to instigator.” Bhattacharya (2002) argued that, “Since students learn from thinking about what they are doing, the teacher’s role becomes one of stimulating and supporting activities that engage learners in critical thinking.” Authorities in the field of critical thinking agree that teachers must be facilitators of thinking and use questions that promote deeper thinking and learning (Hess, 2016; Stobbaugh, 2013).

Thus, students’ performances on measures of higher-order thinking ability reveal a critical need for students to develop the skills and attitudes of effective thinking. Furthermore, another reason that supports the need for thinking skills instruction is the fact that educators appear to be in general agreement that it is possible to increase students’ creative and critical thinking capacities through instruction and practice. Presseisen (1986) asserted that the basic premise is that students can learn to think better if schools teach them how to think. Adu-Febiri (2002) agreed that thinking can be learned. According to Sousa (2006), students are not actually taught to think because children are born with the brain organizational structure that originates thinking. As educators, students can be assisted in organizing the content of their thinking to facilitate complex reasoning. Sousa supported Bloom’s Taxonomy as an organizational structure that is compatible with the manner in which the brain processes information to promote comprehension.

The sections Homework and Parent Activities for Levels 2-5 or Word Study and Parent Activities for Level 1 are located at the conclusion of each unit in the Student Edition. Total Motivation Read-
ing includes these activities to invite and encourage parent engagement in the education of their children. Product developers recognize that teachers must support and encourage parent collaboration with students regarding reading. Teachers are provided with activities per unit with which to cultivate parent involvement with their children by reinforcing previously introduced skills. Research has concluded that productive collaboration and interaction with parents have a favorable impact on attitudes towards reading and student achievement (Calabrese Barton et al, 2004). Parents can be significant contributors to the learning process. Opportunities for parents to be involved in their students’ learning allow parents to show an interest in the students’ work. Parent involvement helps parents become familiar with the content and the way students are learning. When parents take time to provide home encouragement, students have another opportunity to apply and practice the concepts previously learned.

Research has indicated that the more parents are involved and excited in the learning of their children, the more successful a child can be academically. When schools cultivate partnerships and engage families in their children’s education, author Constantino (2008) stated, student achievement can increase. In addition, Constantino noted that schools must continuously nurture relationships with parents by providing them with resources to help their children succeed in school. Constant attention in strengthening relationships lays the foundation for high-quality engagement. West (1985) and Weller (1999) indicated that there are parent behaviors that can lead to effective schools. When parents are supportive, interested, and involved, the success rate of students can rise. Students in at-risk situations show an increase in grades, test scores, and academics when their parents become involved in instructional programs (Dolan, 1996). The activities for parents in Total Motivation Reading offer opportunities within each unit to reach and meaningfully engage parents.

Bagin and Gallagher (2001) noted that communicating on a regular basis with parents can promote student learning and reduce attendance problems. Weller (1999) advised that when schools and teachers treat parents with genuine concern and make them feel important, welcome, and needed, parents are more apt to take an active role in supporting their children in academic achievement. Thus, a letter is offered at the back of each Total Motivation Reading Teacher Edition inviting parents to join in the education of their children. The one-page Homework page contains a paragraph accompanied by three or four questions to address various tested student expectations. Each Homework paragraph connects to the information presented within the unit passage. The 2-3 multiple-choice formatted questions and an open-ended question provide additional skill practice, assessment, and critical thinking opportunities. Vocabulary development is addressed with one or more questions. The remaining questions address some aspect of reading comprehension.

Following the homework exercise, Parent Activities are provided to help parents support their children with meaningful and relevant applications to the previously taught concepts. Findings from an extensive research review on parent/family involvement programs were shared by Henderson and Mapp (2002) in the report *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*. Henderson and Mapp concurred with other researchers that a favorable and substantiated relationship exists between family involvement and student success, regardless of race/ethnicity, class, or parents’ level of education. A key finding is that children of parents
who are involved in home and in school settings show improved performance in school. Thus the sections Homework and Parent Activities are provided to help parents support their children with meaningful and relevant applications to the previously taught concepts. The information given helps the parent and child build oral language through informal conversation. Simply stated, the text invites parents to support learning by asking questions, making relevant comments, or setting up other home learning activities to reinforce previously introduced concepts. Assignments, intended to be completed in class or at home, enhance students’ understanding, skills, and proficiency in reading. Total Motivation Reading reflects the careful planning taken by the Mentoring Minds Product Development Team as they support research findings and develop homework and parent activities that are meaningful extensions of the concepts taught. The Total Motivation Reading Teacher Edition includes a parent letter, written in Spanish and English, so teachers can invite parents to actively support their children in reading instruction.

The application of ELA/R TEKS requires students to develop a depth of understanding as well as the ability to read and comprehend. Therefore, teachers can benefit from quality educational resources that align with the ELA/R TEKS. Studies have shown that teacher subject knowledge has an impact on student achievement (Yoon, et.al, 2007). Researchers have continued to share the importance of content knowledge for effective teaching, but they have also pointed to pedagogy as being essential. Thus, knowledge and skill in how to teach are both necessary. Effective teachers must understand and apply strategies that help students increase achievement. Ongoing targeted professional development is an element that affects student performance, and it can take many forms. Reading and teacher collaboration are both vehicles from which to promote professional development. Total Motivation Reading is a student and teacher resource that focuses on teaching and learning of standards that are applicable to reading. The Teacher Edition for Total Motivation Reading is designed to provide teachers an array of information that can guide them in the implementation of the standards to promote a high level of reading achievement. All sections give teachers background knowledge in what to teach and suggestions for activities. The contents will guide teachers in the preparation and planning of effective instruction and successful use of Total Motivation Reading to enhance student achievement in reading. In turn, the Teacher Edition can be said to increase a teacher's knowledge and improve a teacher's preparation. Collaboration and receiving feedback from other colleagues while implementing Total Motivation Reading can advance teacher understanding of ELA/R TEKS and effective instructional practices.

The section entitled Components delineates a descriptive overview of the components of each reading unit followed with suggestions on how a teacher might use the components. Another feature in the Teacher Edition is the TEKS Frequency Chart. This section denotes all Readiness and Supporting Standards and student expectations for each unit in the Student Edition. This chart lists each unit title and the number of assessment questions from both the unit selection and the homework passage that address the TEKS/STAAR Reporting Categories. A TEKS Frequency Chart is an organizational tool from which teachers may identify standards which are in need of reteaching and/or may need tutorials. Answer keys for each unit, vocabulary pertinent to each individual reading selection, and a grade appropriate glossary for each level are also included in the Teacher Edition. Answer keys identify coding based on TEKS, STAAR® Reporting Categories, Readiness and Supporting Standards, and English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS).

Enrichment literature that can be used for integrating lessons across the curriculum is noted for each individual reading unit. Recommended books may relate to the content of the selection, focus reading skills, or both. Children’s literature offers excellent resources to help students form connections between literature and skills instruc-
tion. Skill-based literature is also identified which can be used to develop, reinforce, and extend targeted ELA/R skills. Literature brings relevance to skills, strengthens student motivation, and presents meaningful contexts for stimulating a variety of responses to critical and creative thinking. Higher levels of engagement are increased when discussions are held to build conceptual understanding. Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading (Anderson, 1985) stressed the importance of the integration of reading. Reading is a communication tool that helps students become successful learners, impacting the rest of their lives.

Within the Teacher Edition is the section Unpacking the TEKS. This section introduces teachers to the ELA/R TEKS. These pages identify the TEKS, describe the skill or concepts within, and offer suggestions for practice and skill mastery of the student expectation. This information builds background knowledge for teachers or provides information relating to skill or concept development. Enrichment or practice activities to fit the needs of a particular student, a small group of students, or the entire class can be selected from those provided and used to foster active learning, offer additional practice, provide the means for assessing students beyond traditional classroom methods, reteach or reinforce concepts, or provide targeted skill intervention.

Many other topics are included in the Teacher Edition to assist teachers as they plan high-quality, effective instruction. Topics include: 5E Model of Instruction; Reading Comprehension; Questions Before, During, and After Reading; Reading Graphic Organizers; Genres; Four Rs; and STAAR Reporting Categories: Readiness and Supporting Standards. Previously mentioned studies note the importance of providing teachers with information that will help improve their skills in the preparation, planning, and delivery of high-quality instruction.

Suggestions are also provided to classroom teachers on how to address critical thinking using Bloom’s Taxonomy to stimulate and develop students’ higher order thinking skills. Reading questioning prompts are included on all six levels of thinking and other question stems that stimulate and encourage creative thinking are also suggested. Bloom (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956) developed a classification of the levels of intellectual behavior in learning. This taxonomy contained three domains: the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective. Within the cognitive domain, Bloom identified six levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. This domain and all levels are still useful today in developing the critical thinking skills of students.

The model used to develop critical thinking throughout the Student and Teacher Editions of Total Motivation Reading is Bloom’s Taxonomy (1956). The English Language Arts Product Development Team employed this framework to stimulate and develop students’ higher order thinking skills and to make extensions to the real world. Critical thinking is integrated into each component of the unit through higher-order questions and complex problematic situations. Students are invited to shift to new levels of increased awareness when analyzing, problem solving, and evaluating. In the Student Edition, two pages are dedicated to the component Critical Thinking. This opportunity is presented to entice students to think critically and move them beyond basic comprehension and rote memorization. This component typically offers open-ended questions that are coded to all six levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy. While students are applying and using higher order thinking skills in real-life situations, they are also learning to question the accuracy of their responses or solutions.

Strategies to develop vocabulary and promote meaningful connections are also included with-
in the Teacher Edition that accompanies Total Motivation Reading for students. Assessment questions pertaining to these words are included in the Student Edition. Passages within Total Motivation Reading include underlined vocabulary words. Students have to understand vocabulary to understand the academic content they encounter in school. Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) revealed that when specific vocabulary from academic subject areas is selected as the focus of instruction, the result was a 33% increase. Therefore, it appears that when students are taught specific content vocabulary in each subject area at each grade level, students have an excellent opportunity to acquire the academic background knowledge they need to understand the subject area content. Teaching content vocabulary using a systematic approach appears to be a powerful tool for student success (Marzano & Pickering, 2005). Furthermore, research firmly documents that academic background knowledge has an effect on academic achievement. Any intervention for the achievement of students should identify increasing students’ content vocabulary knowledge through direct instruction as a leading priority (Marzano, 2004). In earlier research, Becker (1977) concluded that the implementation of systematic vocabulary programs appeared essential in order to close gaps between students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and those who were not.

Student acquisition of vocabulary is imperative to success in reading comprehension. The significance of its relationship to comprehension was supported by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000). Researchers have agreed that vocabulary level differences among students are reasons for the varied ranges in academic achievement (Baumann & Kameenui, 1991; Stanovich, 1986). Although studies have revealed the importance of vocabulary instruction, schools exist that neither have frequent nor systematic vocabulary instruction (Lesaux, Kieffer, Faller, & Kelley, 2010; Scott and Nagy, 1997). Students must be given varied and repeated opportunities to comprehend meaning of words and to use them in different contexts. (Landauer, McNamara, Dennis, & Kintsch, 2007). The Vocabulary Focus page features selection-specific vocabulary and TEKS vocabulary in the unit. Each unit offers a Word Study activity with the purpose being to engage students in activities that focus on the foundation skills of print awareness, phonological awareness, and phonics if they are to successfully read and comprehend texts. Thus, Total Motivation Reading acknowledges these findings and reflects the importance of vocabulary in the development of this resource.

Researchers noted that generally between 5 and 15% of new words when read for the first time are retained. Furthermore, the weaker the student’s vocabulary the smaller the gain (Hayes & Ahrens, 1988; Herman, Anderson, Pearson, & Nagy, 1987). Research has indicated that students must comprehend approximately 95% of the terms (Carver, 1994). Therefore, as students encounter new words, they benefit significantly when instruction centers on connections and patterns in the language (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2008). When teachers extend vocabulary development with reading, writing, speaking, and listening opportunities, students become more aware of how these interrelated skills impact word learning. The product development team made a conscious effort to include vocabulary as an integral element in Total Motivation Reading.

Exposure to vocabulary and interaction with language throughout education years enable students to comprehend word meanings, build awareness of language, and apply their knowledge to understand as well as to produce language. Within each Student Edition of Total Motivation Reading, a glossary of key terms related to the ELA/R is found. These words increase student comprehension of terms pertinent to the TEKS and successful performance in reading. A common academic language is essential to support application of the academic vocabulary with texts and assessments. In the Teacher Edition, the same glossary is contained. Within each unit
in the Teacher Edition, the vocabulary is identified with an asterisk placed aside the terms that are assessed in the passage.

Earlier in 2012, the United States Department of Education and the Federal Communications Commission announced a blueprint to invite schools to transition to digital textbooks by the end of the next five years. While not mandated, the initiative encouraged schools to make the switch from print-to-digital materials based on the projected cost-savings and the academic improvement. These benefits are due to the expense of printed textbooks and the personalization of digital content. Total Motivation Reading also features a print-to-digital transition. Campuses will have digital access to all the Student and Teacher Edition content if using Internet-connected computers, providing an interactive delivery method for their students and classrooms. This new dimension of flexibility offers an engaging learning environment, not only for educators, but also for students. Tools such as online progress monitoring, automatic tracking, and reporting are built into this innovative program. With the appropriate use of technology, students can develop deeper understanding of reading skills identified in the ELA TEKS.

Mentoring Minds seeks to understand the issues involved in teaching and learning reading. The National Research Council (2001) asserted that the performance of students in both reading and math at the conclusion of elementary school is an important predictor of their educational success. Students who have not mastered a quality foundation in reading skills can expect to encounter problems across the disciplines throughout their schooling and later. Summary statements such as these, other research findings, and a review of literature combined with recommendations from studies and observations from classroom experiences have yielded much knowledge about what works. With this wealth of information, Total Motivation Reading was developed as a supplement to complement reading instruction for any campus.

Effective instruction and meaningful practice support student success on STAAR®. Within instruction, it is important that students acquire and use the language of the English Language Arts/Reading TEKS. Total Motivation Reading offers students in-depth exposure to all assessed genres. Furthermore, these genres are associated with relevant learning activities that include compare/contrast strategies and opportunities to analyze and make connections between different genres and strands. The Mentoring Minds ELA Product Development Team embraces the goal that all students receive quality-based opportunities to develop the essential reading skills so that they can read to learn for the remainder of their lives. Teachers must establish an environment conducive to independent reading and include a variety of literature. They must also provide their students quality reading instruction, addressing the Reading TEKS in order to develop literacy and raise the achievement rate. Total Motivation Reading is a resource for teachers and students that aligns with the ELA/R TEKS, contains texts that fall within the general complexity ranges for specific grade levels, and offers numerous opportunities that promote depth, rigor, and complexity of thought.

**Bibliography for Total Motivation Reading**


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