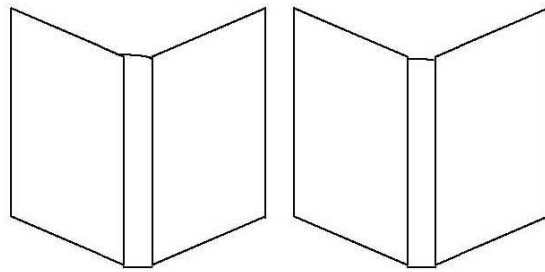


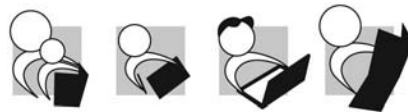
# COCA



Concepts of Comprehension Assessment

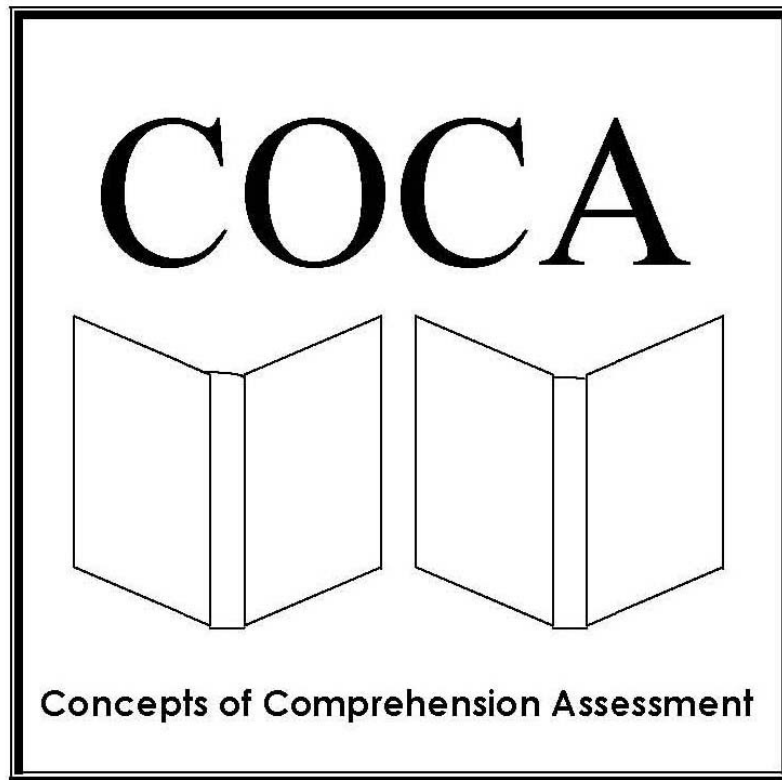
# *MANUAL*

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**L A R C**

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## **Introduction to the Manual**

This manual provides information that supports your use of the Concepts of Comprehension Assessment, also known as the COCA.

At this point you have probably previewed the COCA documents that are part of this guide. If not, taking the time to do that before continuing may help as you read.

### **Organization of the Manual**

This manual contains several important sections that you should be familiar with before administering the COCA for the first time, including explanations of the:

- 1) Organization and purpose of the COCA assessment,
- 2) COCA books, and
- 3) Administration procedures and guidelines

The necessary documents to administer and score the COCA are downloadable from the LARC website at [www.msularc.org](http://www.msularc.org).

### **Before Administering the COCA**

Before administering the assessment to students, we recommend practicing both the administration and scoring with colleagues. We recommend this practice because:

(1) If this assessment is going to be used by a group of teachers or added to a grade level battery of assessments, it is important that all administrators who are giving and scoring the assessment are doing so consistently. By taking the time to practice, teachers are more likely to score consistently from child to child and class to class.

(2) If this assessment is going to be used as a measurement tool during research, practice sessions can also be used to improve interrater reliability.

To facilitate these practice sessions, you may want to use the COCA companion DVD, available on the LARC website ([www.msularc.org](http://www.msularc.org)). Besides an introduction to the COCA and its components, the DVD includes three example administrations. Viewers can listen and record student responses as they view the DVD. The viewers can then practice scoring the student responses and compare their own scores with the scored sheets that are included after each sample administration on the DVD.

# Introduction to the COCA

The Concepts of Comprehension Assessment (COCA) is intended to be used in the first and second grades. Designed to be administered to children individually, it provides information about how they comprehend informational text.



There are two forms of the COCA, *Dragonflies* and *Salmon*. For each form, there is (1) An Administration Protocol with text and prompts), (2) A specially designed informational text, (3) A Student Score Sheet, and (4) A Scoring Guide.

## What the COCA Measures

The COCA is specially designed to include opportunities to ask children questions during the reading of the text. The questions and prompts assess four different dimensions of informational comprehension:

- **Comprehension Strategy Use** (specifically, the strategies of activating prior knowledge, prediction, inferring, and summarizing)
- **Knowledge of Informational Text Features**
- **Comprehension of Graphics in the Context of Text** (for example, integrating the information provided by the text and illustrations)
- **Vocabulary**: specifically vocabulary knowledge (e.g. knowledge of some words commonly used in informational text such as *analyze*, *compare*, and *observe*) and vocabulary strategies, the ability to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words that are specific to the text such as *photosynthesis* or *hibernation*.

The children’s answers give insight into students’ comprehension and knowledge of informational text in relationship to these four dimensions. More information regarding these four dimensions can be found in the document titled “Dimensions of Informational Text Comprehension.”

(You can download this information, under the same title, at the Literacy Achievement Research Center website: [www.msularc.org](http://www.msularc.org).)

## **Ways to Use the COCA**

### Which Students

There are many ways you might use the COCA. You might choose to administer it to every student in your class. However, because the COCA is individually administered and takes approximately 15 minutes per student to administer, this may not be possible or even advisable. In this case, you might administer the COCA to a subset of students in your class based on your instructional purposes. This could be a group of students about whose informational reading comprehension you are particularly concerned. The results would help identify areas for targeting instruction. Or it could be a group of students who seem to be thriving in their informational reading comprehension and for whom you would like to identify some next steps for their learning. Or it could be a ‘random’ group or subset of students in the class, with the idea that their scores could provide a general snapshot of students’ reading comprehension strengths and needs across the whole class.

### When and How Often

Some teachers may want to administer the COCA only once in a school year. Others may want to administer it more than once over time to see how students’ informational reading comprehension is developing. To facilitate this, we have developed two forms of the COCA: *Salmon* and *Dragonflies*. As of the publication of this manual, however, we are still working on analyses to find the best ways to compare students’ scores on one form of the COCA to their scores on the other. This information will be in our technical report (which will also report on other aspects of reliability and on the validity of the assessment).

You can administer just one form of the COCA to the same students more than once. However, in this case, some time would need to elapse between the first time you administer the form and the second time. It is important that students’ memory from the first administration is not affecting their performance on the second administration. We are unsure how much time

needs to elapse. Our guess (and only a guess—we have not conducted research on this question) is that it needs to be at least two months, with several months being safe.

For information on interpreting the COCA, please see the final section of this manual, **Interpreting the COCA** (page 11).



## The COCA Books

There are two picture books that are a critical piece of the COCA assessment. *Dragonflies* and *Salmon* are specially designed informational picture books.

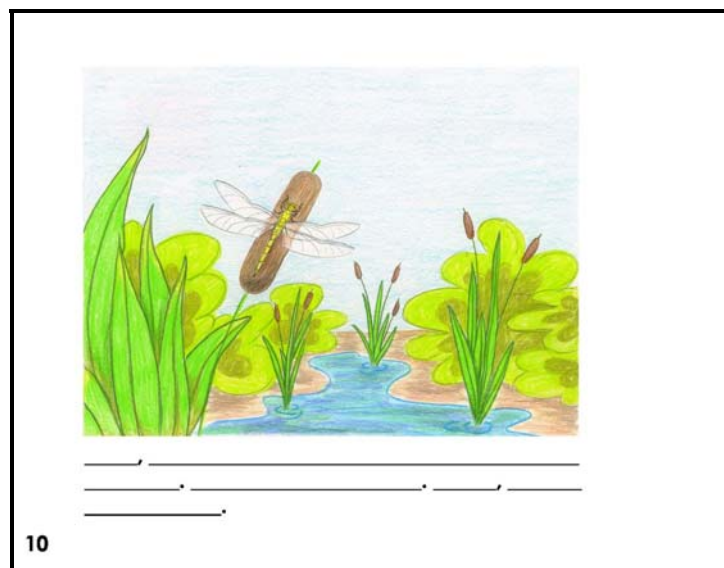
The information about dragonflies and salmon included in the books was carefully gathered, written and then reviewed by experts for accuracy.



The design of the books and the text focused on providing authentic contexts for assessing the five dimensions of informational text comprehension.

### Design Features of the Book

One design feature you will notice when you examine the books, is lines on the page instead of text (see below). For this assessment the administrator reads the text that matches or goes with each page. As you can imagine most children will notice that the words are missing. So, before the beginning of the assessment the administrator asks the children if they note the missing words. Then the administrator explains that he/she will read the words for each page and point to the page while he/she is reading the appropriate words. This way the child will know which page to pay attention to.



## The COCA Questions

The COCA questions are designed to assess the student's use of the four dimensions of informational text comprehension. Some questions require the child to use the graphics or pictures on the page. Some require the child to base his or her response on the text that the child has heard; and some ask the children to supply a missing word in a sentence from the text. Before beginning the assessment, the administrator explains to the child that some of the sentences have words missing and that the child will be asked to provide the word that will best fill in the blank. Administrators alert the child to this type of question during the assessment through the Text and Prompts documents included for each book.

# Preparing to Administer the COCA

## Materials

All of the materials that you will need to administer the COCA are included in this manual. You will need:

- COCA books: *Dragonflies* and *Salmon*
- Student Explanation
- The Text and Prompts for the COCA (opened to the form you will be using)
- The matching form of the Student Score Sheet for each child you are planning to assess

## Administration Time

The assessments are administered individually. Each assessment requires about 15-20 minutes. This time varies depending on the child.

## Administration Set-up

Find a quiet place where the child can comfortably view and reach the book during the administration session. For this assessment the children need to see the pages of the book. The administrator should sit beside the child and place the book in front of the child. During the assessment the children are encouraged to use the book to help them answer the questions. If the book is easy to see and reach, they will be more likely to use it. Asking them to turn the page after answering a question also encourages them to feel free to use the book.



## **The Administration Session**

### The Administration Protocol

Each assessment session begins with the Student Explanation; the first page of the Administration Protocol. Working through this explanation with the student introduces him or her to the format of the session, the COCA books, and the types of questions that will be asked.

The assessment then continues with the Text and Prompts. You will notice that the text and prompts are carefully scripted. In assessments of this kind, it is important to follow the script exactly. This ensures that each time you administer the COCA each child is receiving the assessment in a similar way. For this reason, you will want to preview the text and prompts document ahead of time. Also, it is important for you to be familiar with the questions and the kinds of follow-up prompts that are written.

Consistent administration is important for comparing scores across the classroom and across time. During the administration, the text includes opportunities for you to reread a question or to give a second prompt if the child does not provide an answer or responds with “I don’t know”. For this assessment “I don’t know” is considered the same as giving no answer. In those cases where the child says “I don’t know” the administrator rereads the prompt or reads the follow-up prompt based the instructions within each item.

***It can't be emphasized enough how important it is for you to follow the script. Do not reread the text or ask a question more times than the text and prompts instruct.***

### Guidelines for Reading the Text and Questions Aloud

There are several guidelines that will help children listen to you and pay attention while you read.

- (1) When you are reading the text of the book—that is, the words that would be on the lines—read them as naturally as possible with good inflection—just like you would read during a read-aloud with children.

- (2) When you are ready to read the question or prompt, make a clear break between the text and the prompt. You may find that changing your voice tone is helpful and will alert the child to the question.

### Guidelines for Recording Student Responses

The student score sheet is designed so the administrator can record the child's responses as they are given during the assessment. Try to record the child's responses as completely as possible. This will help you score the responses more accurately later.

You will notice there is a column to the right of the student response column that is marked *reread* (See below). *If you reread a question or use the second prompt, check (✓) this box.* This is important for scoring the child's responses later.

SALMON Score Sheet

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
TEACHER: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Page	Item	Student Response	ReRd/ Fol-up	VK	CS	TF	GCT
Page 3	1						
Page 5	2						
Page 6	3						
Page 7	4						
Page 8	5						
Page 10	6						
Page 12	7						
Page 13	8						
Page 14	9						
Page 15	10						
Page 16	11						
Page 19	12						
Page 20	13						
Page 21	14						
Page 22	15						
Page 23	16						
Page 24	17						
Page 25	18						
Page 25	19						

K = Don't Know  
 E = Request Repeat  
 F = Follow up

Subtotal (each construct) \_\_\_\_\_  
Composite TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

DRAGONFLY Score Sheet

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
TEACHER: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Page	Item	Student Response	ReRd/ Fol-up	V	CS	TF	GCT
Page 2	1	I don't know / a picture book	✓				
	2						
Page 3	3						
Page 4	4						
Page 5	5						
Page 6	6						
Page 7	7						
Page 9	8						
Page 10	9						

**In this example, when asked "What kind of book is this one?" the child answered "I don't know". When the administrator followed-up with the second prompt the child answered, "a picturebook".**

### Guidelines for Scoring Student Responses

The COCA administration materials include a scoring guide for each form of the assessment. After administering the COCA use this guide to score each child's response. You may find it easier to take one item and score all of the children's responses on that item.

Each item is scored on a zero (0) to two (2) scale, depending on the quality of the child's response. The scoring guide provides examples of actual student answers, along with the rationale for scoring for each item.

Since the COCA asks children to compose their own responses, we expect that you will encounter responses that are different than the examples we have included. In those cases we have provided a rationale and examples for determining a correct answer. Score the child's response using the rationale. We suggest that you make notes of responses that are not included in the sample responses in the scoring guide as you encounter them, along with the score that they were assigned. This will help you with future scoring and help you to score consistently.

### **Interpreting the COCA**

The COCA is not a norm-referenced assessment. This means that it is not designed to produce scores that form a normal curve or to be used to compare students' scores to that of a norming sample. Instead, we encourage users of the COCA to employ it as a criterion-referenced assessment. Criterion-referenced assessments determine what students can do or know in relationship to an objective standard or performance rather than comparing scores to other students' scores. In that case, the user sets a particular level of performance they would like to see students achieve at a particular point in time and/or a particular rate of growth they would like to see over a particular period of time.

There are at least three ways to look at scores on the COCA items. One is to look at the overall or total score. This score is, of course, the most reliable because there are more items that contribute to the total score. Another way to look at the scores is by dimension—for example, to look at students' total score on the comprehension strategies items. This way of looking at scores can be very helpful for informing instruction, but it has to be approached with some caution because fewer items contribute to the dimension scores. In that respect, the reliability of a student's scores for a dimension is not nearly as high as for the overall score. Finally, you can look at scores on each individual item. This can also be very helpful—for example, if you notice that nearly all of your students got a 0 on the index item, that suggests you should do some teaching or reteaching about the index. That said, you need to be especially cautious in interpreting scores from just one item.

Teachers we have worked with around using the COCA stress that it is very important to set aside time to carefully review the students' scores on

the assessment. They also talk about the value of looking in depth at an individual child's performance as well as looking at items, constructs, and total scores across children. We hope that you, too, find a way or ways of interpreting the COCA that you find to be of value.