*Dr. Don Deshler’s response to the question: In the CCSS, there is a heavy emphasis on college and career readiness.  For example, secondary students are expected to engage in close reading practices in order to comprehend and critically dissect disciplinary texts, much like an expert.  Yet, there are secondary students who still struggle with foundational reading skills like decoding and acquiring generalizable comprehension strategies such as summarizing a passage.  How do teachers balance the need for foundational reading instruction with the need to teach content and disciplinary literacy strategies?*

Excellent question! Very much on the mind of teachers in this country. First of all, the standards place are one that conceived of the best interests of all students including those who struggle with learning including students with disabilities so I don’t think it’s a question of should the standards be changed, or reduced, or modified. So the question becomes one what do we need to do on the instructional front in order to put students in a position that they can and indeed respond to expectations for being engaged in expectations such as course reading event and so forth. I think that the route of solution is the No. 1 to have a clear definition of what is the role that different teacher and different members of secondary staff are going to be playing within a school. I believe that clarity of role is the first thing that helps us put in place a kind of support services and mechanisms that students who are struggling need in order to succeed. First of all, which important to understand that students struggling at secondary schools because the unique features of secondary schools that is the experience they have and they work through the school day is very fragrant. That is they go from teacher A to teacher B to teacher C to teacher D. Unlike elementary school they typically have one or two teachers and so the experiences they get in the classes of the teachers are often very unrelated and fragrant and hinders the opportunity to build up the critical math skills or to have a targeted set of skills trying to have students acquire. The probability of that happening in one period during the day is often quite low because the gap these kids are facing is so large. So it ‘s important that teachers understand there are different roles that I play if I am a science teacher or English teacher relative to literacy versus if I happen to be the supplemental reading teacher or resource teacher within a secondary school. And if we make that distinction and differentiation so that teachers don’t feel they need to carry the entire load relative to literacy (entertainment 5:48?), it makes it much more doable. We need to, everyone needs to view the challenge as one that requires all hands on deck. In other words, we can’t say, “Oh, it’s up to the reading teacher or the literacy coach to take care of the kids who are struggling.” No, it’s all hands on deck. We all have a role to play but it’s a different role. For example, those are in the general education classroom the content teachers, if they can among the things do these things. No. 1 be very careful in selecting what content they are going to teach and identify and differentiate the critical content is critical, the content that is difficult to learn and recognize that is their job, the subject matter experts to mediate that understanding of that content. And if they do that, and transform and change the critical content as they teach the students, as they engage them in the activities so that all the students can access and benefit and work with the content. That will go a long way to have kids take up the critical content. Secondly, it’s important for them to identify essential vocabulary because you can’t access subject matter and content without understanding some of the key vocabulary and to teach and emphasize that. Then the third thing is for them to model on an ongoing basis the kinds of strategies that a learner of history if you are a history teacher or a learner of science that a science teacher would use if they are navigating text. Let me give you an example. A history person often asks these kinds of questions like what’s the context within this which this is happening, what is the cooperative evidence, and so forth. Oh, well, if a learner of history is asking himself those kinds of questions. Make that explicit to students every time you start to go into the materials in the class. Model asking those questions on how you as learners would do that. So you are demonstrating on an ongoing basis how I do this within my discipline so you are providing continual opportunity for students to see how you should navigate text. Those are the things general ed teacher should do and could do. If they do that on a consistent basis across all the content classes, it’s really going to help students. But then we need to recognize the students; many students need some Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports. That’s where supplemental reading instruction if the problem is the reading one needs to come in and play where students have opportunities to get some intensive, direct, and explicit instruction on some of these specific strategies they need to use on a fluent basis in their content classes. But in order for a supplemental reading teacher to do that, they cannot be expected to tutor the students to help them pass the test back in their general ed classroom. And that’s often what happens if the roles get messed up, and so the general ed teacher sometimes says, “Hold, I always talk content this way, I’m not going to do some of the ways I described before but what I will do for those kids who are getting that, they are down the supplemental reading teacher and the resource room they all tutor them to make sure they get through the test so they are accepting then if the supplemental or the resource teacher says, “Oh, I accept that responsibility. “ They are the lines on what their roles should be. A role in integrity is critical. If that happens on a sustain, regular, and intensive basis, we then can put in place of foundation whereby students can be successful and responding to some of the demands of the Common Core.