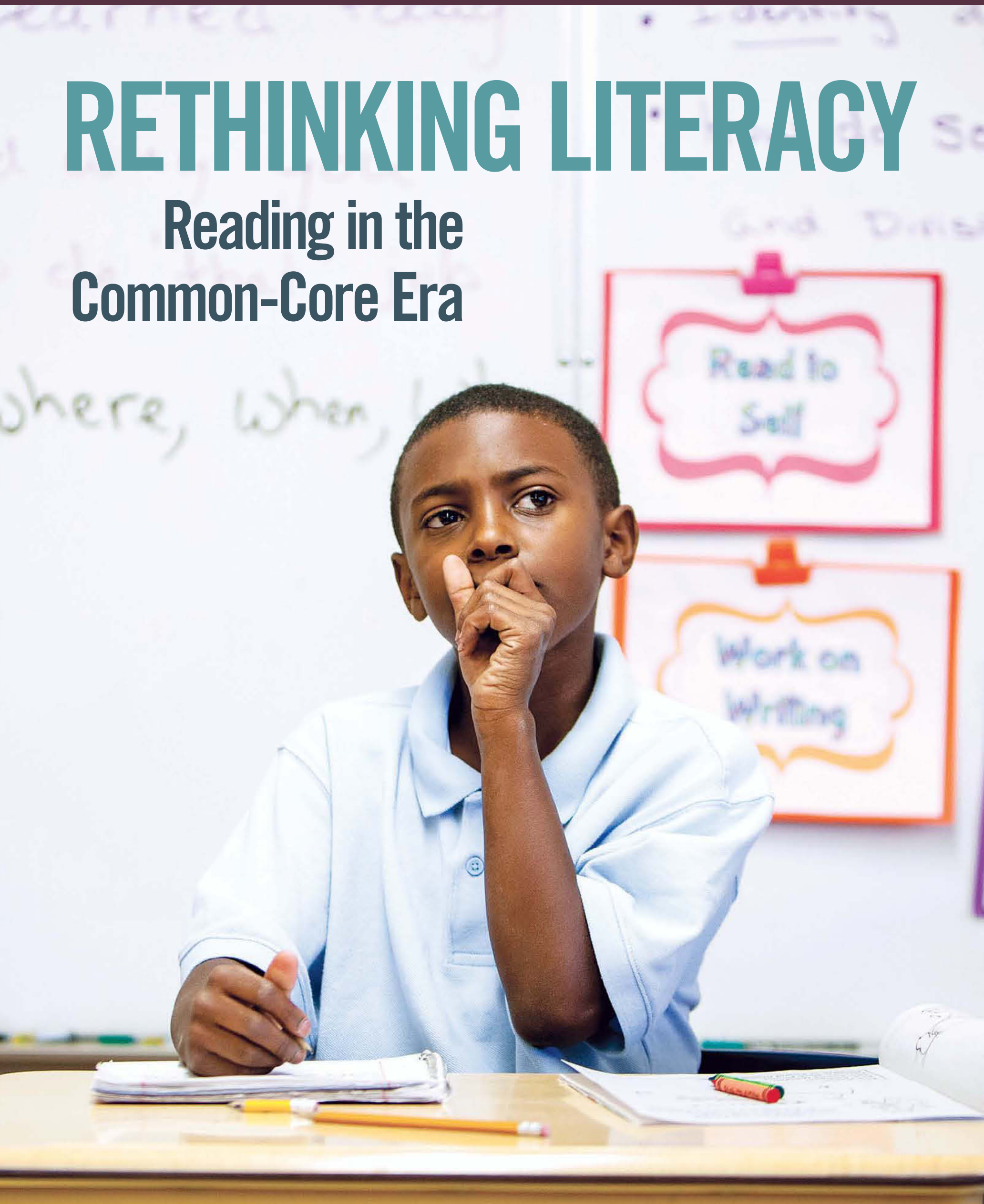
EDUCATION WEEK
A Special Report on Literacy > www.edweek.org/go/common-reading

A Supplement to the November 14, 2012, Issue
Vol. 32 • No. 12

RETHINKING LITERACY

Reading in the Common-Core Era



STAY AHEAD OF THE CURVE WITH COMMON CORE 360
With over 110 training segments, dozens of in-class examples of Common Core lessons, a learning progression tool, the world's largest online community, and more, your teachers will have everything they need to turn state standards into student achievement.

Are you ready to teach to the Core? Get free access today.
www.commoncore360.com/ew | 877-778-9360

COMMON CORE 360™
School Improvement Network

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT NETWORK®

VOICES OF EDUCATION

Surveys by School Improvement Network

School Improvement Network is taking the opinions of America's educators and sharing their voices on the most important issues in education. Participate in the next survey from November 12 – 30 and be automatically entered to win a free Kindle Fire! Learn more at **schoolimprovement.com/survey**.

WIN A kindle fire

Events

ONLINE CHAT

Literacy and the Common Core: Reflecting on the Research

Tuesday, Nov. 27, 2 p.m. ET

The common-core standards make dramatic changes in what it means to be literate in the digital age. Guests will discuss what the research says about these demands and how teachers can ensure their students meet the new requirements.

www.edweek.org/go/chat/literacy

WEBINAR

Common Core State Standards: Literacy and English-Language Learners

Tuesday, Dec. 4, 2 p.m. ET

As educators begin putting the common core into classroom practice, what instructional strategies will they need to bridge the gap between acquiring language and truly mastering academic content for ELLs? This webinar examines how teachers can develop and support literacy and academic language skills of ELLs in the common-core era.

www.edweek.org/go/webinar/CommonCoreReading

LEADERSHIP FORUM

Road Maps to Common Core Success

March 11, 2013 in Indianapolis and March 21, 2013, in White Plains, N.Y.

Join district leaders, experts, and colleagues to find your way around obstacles that can hinder success, at the Leadership Forum—an interactive day focused on discovering strategies and new approaches to the common-core roadblocks you're facing.

www.edweekevents.org

Common-Core Coverage

Catch up on all the news, commentary, and analyses related to policy and implementation around the Common Core State Standards Initiative on this collection page:

www.edweek.org/go/standards

Copyright © 2012 by Editorial Projects in Education Inc.
All rights reserved. No part of this publication shall be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic or otherwise, without the written permission of the copyright holder. Readers may make up to five print copies of this publication at no cost for personal, noncommercial use, provided that each includes a full citation of the source.

Visit www.edweek.org/go/copies for information about additional print photocopies.

A pupil studies a character from the Dr. Seuss book *The Lorax* during exercises that integrate writing, reading, and drawing at the Blue School in Landaff, N.H. Often ignored, writing is now gaining prominence in the curriculum. PAGE 10

PHOTO, THIS PAGE: John Tully for Education Week

Contents

CLICK ON THE DIGITAL EDITION: Read the digital (PDF) edition of this report and forward copies to your colleagues. www.edweek.org/go/common-download

PRESIDENT & EDITOR IN-CHIEF
Virginia B. Edwards

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Gregory Chronister

MANAGING EDITORS
Karen Diegmueller
Kathleen Kennedy Manzo

EXECUTIVE PROJECT EDITORS
Karen Diegmueller, Debra Viadero

SENIOR WRITER
Catherine Gewertz is the lead common-core writer for *Education Week*.

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Lesli A. Maxwell covers English-learners for Education Week.

Erik W. Robelen covers curriculum for Education Week.

Stephen Sawchuk covers the teaching profession for Education Week.

Sarah D. Sparks covers research for *Education Week*.

DESIGN DIRECTOR
Laura Baker

DEPUTY DESIGN DIRECTOR
Gina Tomko

ASSISTANT DESIGN DIRECTOR
Vanessa Solis

DESIGNER
Linda Jurkowitz

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Charles Borst

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Nicole Frugé

DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION
Jo Arnone

ADVERTISING PRODUCTION COORDINATOR
Casey Shellenberger

ADVERTISING:
For information about print and online advertising in future special reports, please contact Senior Regional Advertising Manager Sharon Makowka, at smakowka@epe.org or (815) 436-5149.

COVER PHOTO
Zaz Robinson, a student in Yolanda Medrano's 4th grade class at Emerson Elementary School in Albuquerque, N.M., ponders the "who, what, where, when and why" of the career fair he attended with his classmates. Ms. Medrano assigned the class a journaling exercise following the fair to bring the activity within the common-core approach the school has adopted.

Photo by Kitty Clark Fritz for Education Week

OVERVIEW

Common Standards Drive New Reading Approaches

Schools across the country are undergoing huge shifts to satisfy the state-led literacy and math initiative

The Common Core State Standards aren't exactly new; it's been two years since most states adopted them. But it took those two years for the standards to trickle down from abstraction to daily practice, from a sheaf of papers in a state capital into a lesson plan on a teacher's desk. Now they're reshaping reading instruction in significant ways.

Whether the standards are shining a bright new light on reading or casting an ominous shadow over it remains a point of debate. But without a doubt, the shifts in literacy instruction envisioned by the common core are among the biggest in recent decades. And they're far-reaching: All but four states have adopted the literacy guidelines.

The standards paint an ambitious picture of what it means to be literate in the 21st century, said P. David Pearson, a professor of language, literacy, society, and culture at the University of California, Berkeley.

"I think these standards have the potential to lead the parade in a different direction: toward taking as evidence of your reading ability not your score on a specific skill test—or how many letter sounds you can identify or ideas you can recall from a passage—but the ability to use the information you gain from reading, the fruits of your labor, to apply to some new situation or problem or project," he said. "That's a huge change."

Just take a look at some of the ways classroom instruction is changing because of the common standards.

• Reading instruction is no longer the sole province of the language arts teacher. The standards call for teachers of science, social studies, and other subjects to teach literacy skills unique to their disciplines, such as analyzing primary- and secondary-source documents in history, and making sense of diagrams, charts, and technical terminology in science. A 4th grade teacher in Shell Rock, Iowa, for instance, had his students write science books for 2nd graders in a bid to fuse content understanding with domain-specific literacy skills.

• Reading and writing are closely connected, and writing instruction is explicit. Teaching writing has often fallen by the wayside as teachers focus on reading, but the common core demands its return. And not just any kind of writing—writing studded with citations of details and evidence from students' reading material. Even the youngest pupils are learning to do it: First graders in Vermont are listening to a Dr. Seuss tale, over and over, searching for clues that back up the central thesis of the story.

• The scale tips toward informational text. Teachers are under new pressure to work essays, speeches, articles, biographies, and other nonfiction texts into their students' readings. In Baltimore, middle school students are reading newspaper articles about avatars and school uniforms, along with a cluster of novels, to explore the theme of individuality.

• There's a major press for curriculum materials that embody the common core. Acutely aware of states' and districts' needs, the major educational publishers rushed to issue supplements to their reading programs and followed with new-from-the-ground-up programs that purport to be "common standards aligned." An examination, however, shows that a shared definition of "alignment" can prove elusive.

• Educators are training a keen eye on ways to support students who struggle with literacy skills. The common standards make unprecedented demands on students, such as mastering the difficult academic vocabulary of each discipline, and teachers worry that many students could be left behind. In Albuquerque, N.M., educators are building supports for their many English-learners, setting up one school as a demonstration site where teachers get immersed in the standards and learn strategies for helping students who are still learning the language. Other Albuquerque teachers are working with a national expert to write specially tailored model lessons for 1st and 8th graders.

• Even as the new standards dominate the reading landscape, however, other literacy issues are also coming to the fore in the common-core era. Reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade has proved a popular rallying point for states, some of which have recently enacted policies that toughen various requirements—for teachers as well as for students—in pursuit of that goal.

• New literacy research is also exerting its influence. Findings that have been issued since the National Reading Panel's landmark report in 2000 had a key role in shaping the common standards, including a more nuanced approach to comprehension across the disciplines and media. But in an effort to focus on the end result, critics say, the standards often leave out—or get ahead of—the research on strategies teachers can use to help students achieve these new literacy skills.

False Choice?

The swirls of activity around reading, however, have raised as many or more questions than they purport to answer.

Some teachers worry that the common standards' emphasis on reading informational text, and on writing that's grounded in evidence from that text, could leave little place for reading literature and for the kinds of personal, creative writing that can unleash students' passions.

Advocates of the informational-text approach argue that it is a powerful equalizer in building content knowledge for disadvantaged children, and that it's crucial in building the skills most needed in good jobs and in college. Still others argue that nonfiction can engage some students in ways that fiction can't and that devoting more time to it needn't displace creative writing and literature.

Some reading experts are frustrated with what they see as an unnecessarily polarized debate about the standards. It's a false choice, they argue, to say that students can't write about things they're interested in and still learn to base their ideas solidly on what they've read about those topics.

It's also a false choice, those experts say, to argue that creative writing has to atrophy if expository writing expands. Or that reading great works of literature has to dwindle if students read more original historical documents. Blending all those literacy experiences into students' lives, they argue, is important for building flexible, strong minds.

How will that blend be achieved without sacrificing bulwarks of the discipline? An increasingly common element in answers: more reading.

"We have to dramatically increase the volume of reading kids are doing in English class and beyond," said Penny Kittle, an English/language arts teacher at Kennett High School in North Conway, N.H.

Where will the time come from for that additional reading?

"Time will always be something we have to wrestle with," said Dwight Davis, who is weaving more nonfiction texts, and more challenging books overall, into the poetry and novels he assigns his 5th grade students at the Wheatley Education Campus in the District of Columbia. "Do we have enough time to get it all in?"

Time isn't the only resource in scarce supply as educators put the standards into practice. There is the issue of money, as well. How will districts and states pay for the professional development teachers need to adapt their instruction to the new expectations? And will all teachers get the support they require to provide the right kinds of help to the students with the shakiest skills?

Will schools have the funding to buy instructional materials that encompass a wider variety of text types? And even if the training, materials, and pedagogy come together well, will they indeed produce the college and career readiness that the standards promise?

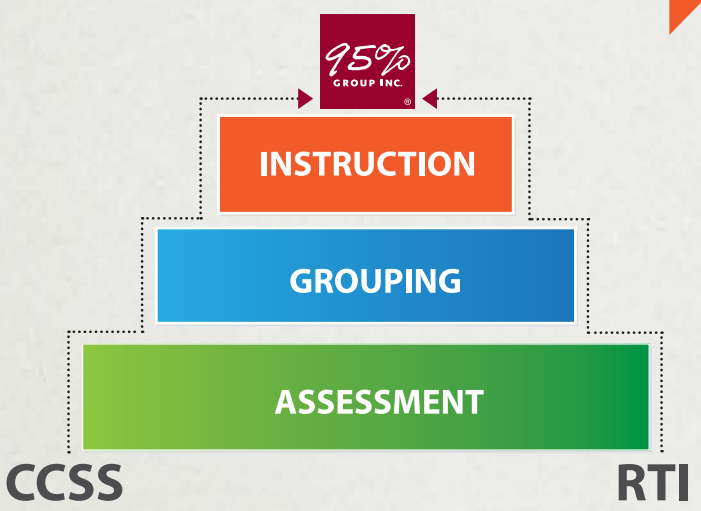
In the new common-core era, question marks appear to be a key feature of the landscape. ■

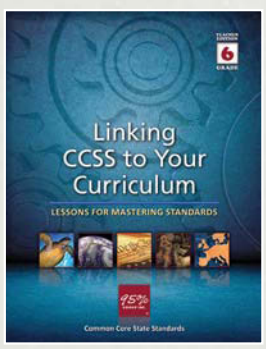
By Catherine Gewertz

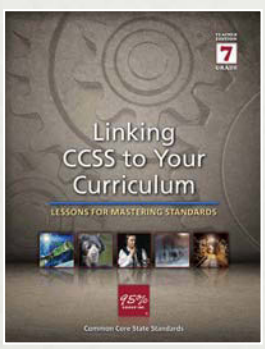
We'll Meet You at the Intersection of...

95% GROUP INC.®

RTI & CCSS







95 Percent Group Inc. was founded by Susan L. Hall, EdD, a nationally recognized leader in RTI, data analysis, and reading instruction. With over 15 years of experience as a consultant to districts and schools, Dr. Hall is a frequent speaker at reading conferences nationwide and has authored several books, including the bestselling I've DIBEL'd, Now What? and Implementing Response to Intervention.

Partner with 95 Percent Group.

Together We'll Move Your Students Forward.

The Common Core State Standards describe the outcomes of Tier I instruction. RTI provides support for students in Tiers 2 and 3 who are reading and writing below grade level. Bringing these two critical literacy initiatives together requires strategic navigation.

That's where 95 Percent Group excels.

- We're experts in helping you implement both initiatives so ALL students have the opportunity to learn the skills of close reading needed for success throughout their school and career experiences.
- Our consulting services, professional development, publications, and tools will help your teachers make cohesive instructional decisions to transition their Tier 1 instruction to the rigor described in the CCSS while addressing deficits for students requiring Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions.
- Our professional development goes beyond the WHAT of the Common Core to give you the HOW—such as HOW instruction looks different when the dialogue is about close reading of text.

Visit this link to see a sample video from a CCSS workshop and to download free instructional aids for teachers.

www.95percentgroup.com/CCSS

www.95percentgroup.com | 847.499.8299

95 percent of students reading at grade level...an achievable goal

STATE POLICIES

At the same time that thousands of school districts nationwide are beginning to implement the Common Core State Standards in English/language arts, many also face new state reading policies for the early grades that call for the identification of struggling readers, require interventions to help them, and, in some instances, mandate the retention of 3rd graders who lack adequate reading skills. A number of states recently adopted such policies, many of which have echoes of a long-standing Florida measure for reading intervention and retention for those who lack adequate reading skills. In all, according to the Education Commission of the States, 32 states plus the District of Columbia now have statutes in place intended to improve reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade.

iStockphoto/Jamie Farrant

Arizona tightens up a recently adopted policy for retaining 3rd graders who score "far below" their grade level on a state reading test, closing what advocates called a "loophole" that allowed parents to override the retention. The state policy calls on districts to provide one of several options to assist both retained students and struggling readers in earlier grades, including assignment to a different teacher for reading instruction, summer school, or other "intensive" help before, during, or after the school day.
PASSED: 2012

Colorado is requiring schools—in partnership with parents—to craft individual plans for struggling readers to get them on track. For 3rd graders with significant reading deficiencies, the parent and teacher must meet and consider retention as an intervention strategy, but the final decision must be jointly agreed to and approved by the district. A special per-pupil fund was created to support specific reading interventions, such as summer school and after-school tutoring.
PASSED: 2012

Connecticut instructs the state education agency to develop new K-3 reading assessments for districts to use in identifying struggling readers. It also mandates that K-3 teachers pass a reading assessment each year beginning in 2013. And it compels the state to devise an intensive program that includes "scientifically based" reading instruction, intensive reading-intervention strategies, summer school, and other features that will be offered for a limited number of schools to use.
PASSED: 2012

Indiana identifies 3rd grade retention as a "last resort" for struggling readers. A state board of education policy says students who fail the state reading test at that grade would be retained, though technically, the state is only requiring that they be counted as 3rd graders for purposes of state testing. The policy allows for midyear promotions and has several good-cause exemptions. Districts must provide a daily reading block of at least 90 minutes to all students in grades K-3 and additional strategies and interventions for those identified as struggling readers.
PASSED: 2010

Iowa requires 3rd graders with an identified "reading deficiency" either to attend an intensive summer reading program or be retained, except for those eligible for several good-cause exemptions. The law also requires, if state funds are appropriated, for districts to provide such students in grades K-3 with intensive instructional services and support to improve reading, including a minimum of 90 minutes of "scientific, research-based" reading instruction and other strategies identified by the district, such as small-group instruction, an extended school day, or tutoring and mentoring.
PASSED: 2012

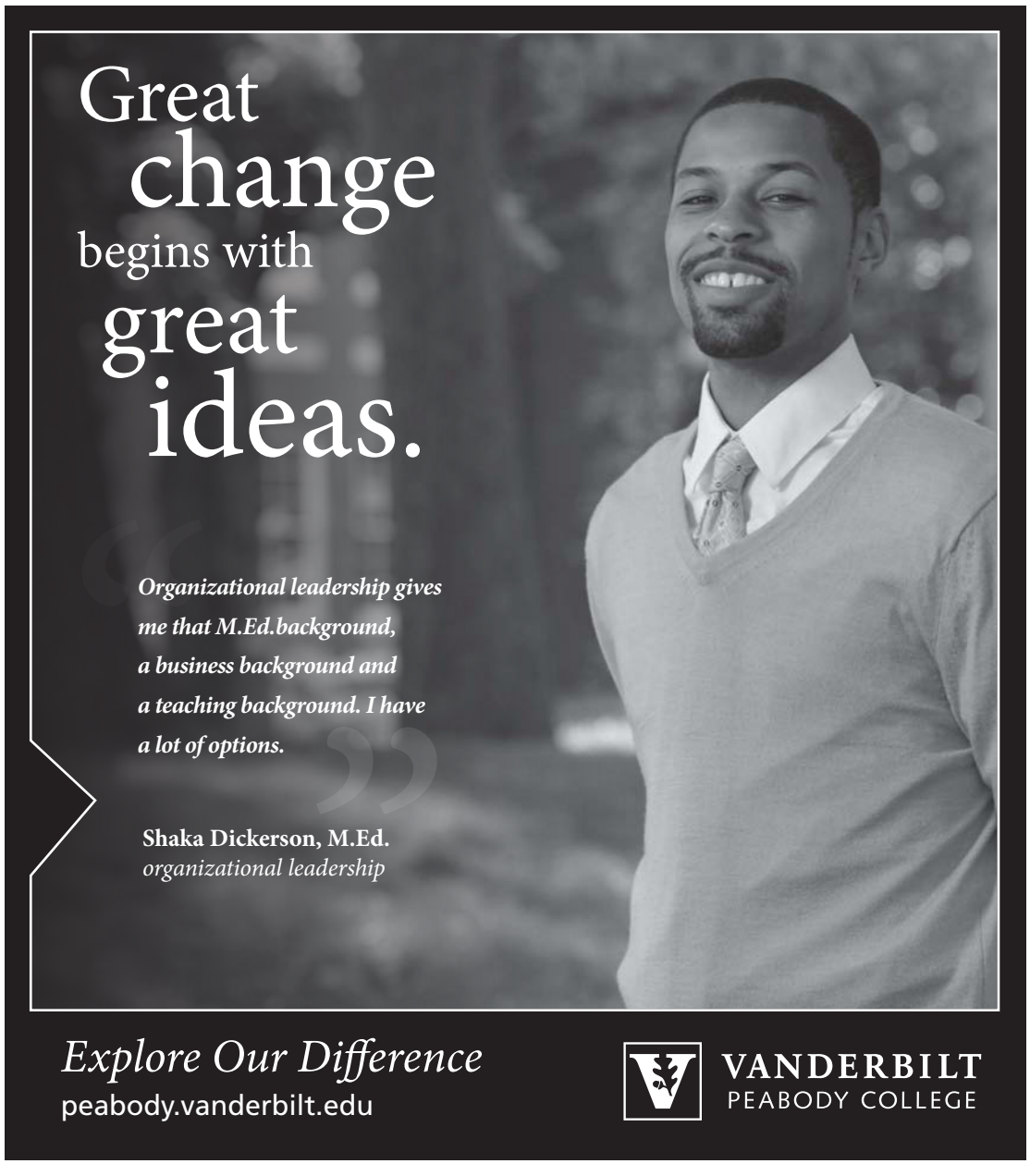
North Carolina schools must retain 3rd graders not reading on grade level, based on a state assessment, unless they meet one of several exemptions, including demonstration of proficiency through an alternative assessment or portfolio. Prior to retention, students must be provided summer reading camps and have one more chance to demonstrate proficiency. The measure also stipulates regular diagnostic assessments and early interventions for struggling readers beginning in kindergarten.
PASSED: 2012 (OVERRIDING GOVERNOR'S VETO)

Ohio requires 3rd graders to meet a certain threshold on the state English/language arts test to advance to the 4th grade, but the law makes exceptions for some students. Districts must annually assess and identify students reading below grade level, and develop a reading improvement and monitoring plan for each pupil. Such students must receive at least 90 minutes of daily reading instruction and be taught by a "high-performing" teacher.
PASSED: 2012

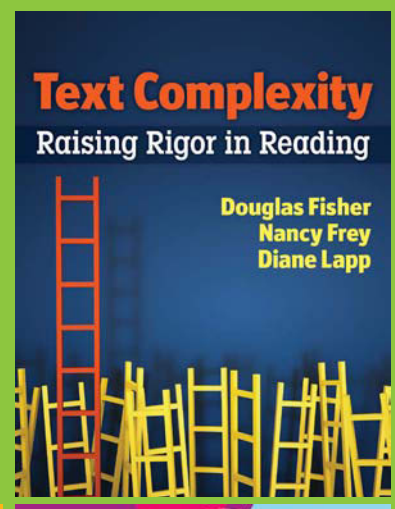
Oklahoma calls for schools to retain 3rd graders who score "unsatisfactory" on the state reading test, though they may qualify for several good-cause exemptions. The new policy calls for districts to offer a midyear promotion for 4th graders who show substantial improvement. The law also calls on districts to identify and provide extra reading support and instructional time for students in K-3 reading below grade level.
PASSED: 2011

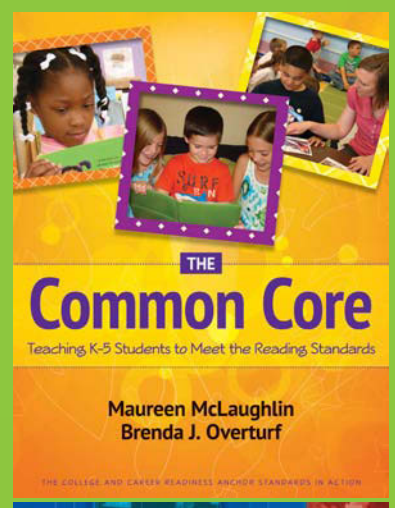
Virginia mandates that local districts provide reading-intervention services to 3rd graders who demonstrate deficiencies on a state reading test or other diagnostic assessment. The measure does not include any requirements for retention.
PASSED: 2012

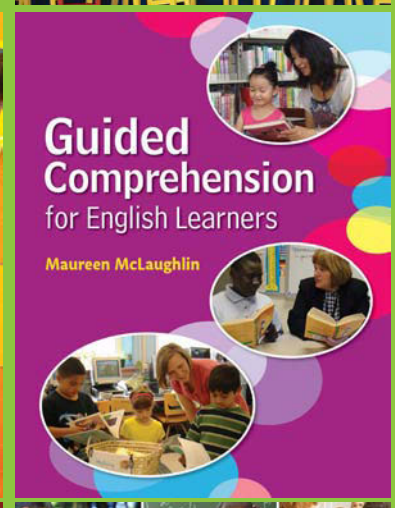
—ERIK W. ROBELEN

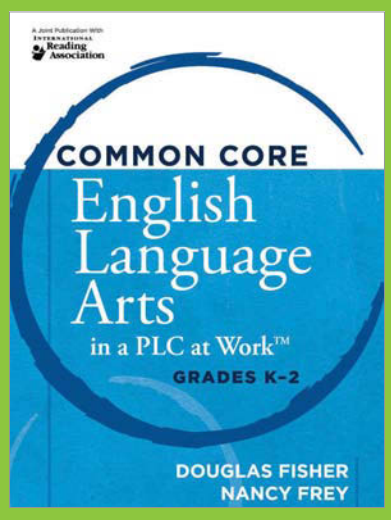


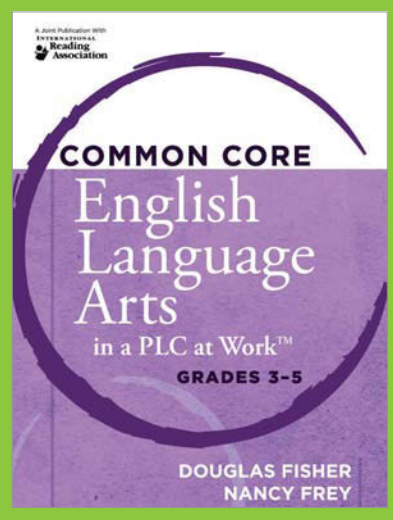
COMMON CORE SUCCESS STARTS WITH IRA

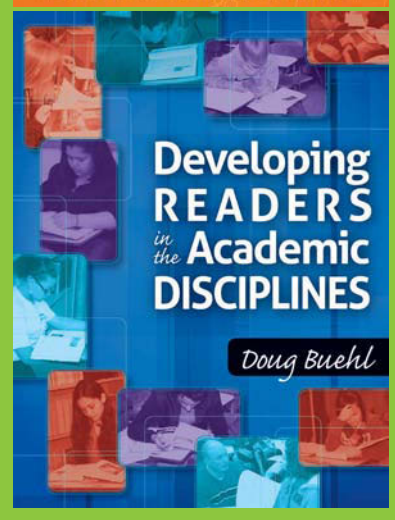


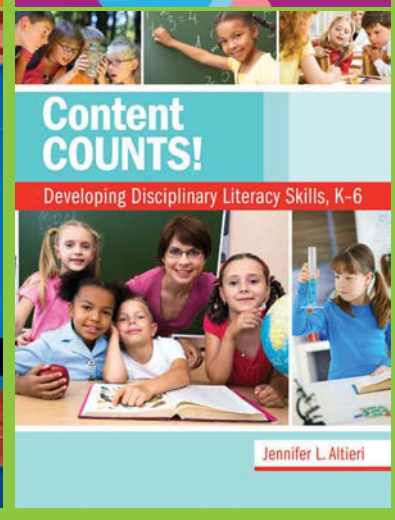












FREE! ELA CCSS Guide

THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS set clear goals for student achievement, but the implementation is in the hands of educators. IRA has a variety of research-based resources from field-leading experts to guide you through implementing the standards and increasing literacy achievement for all learners.

- Books and journal articles
- Webinars and live events
- *Reading Today* and IRA members-only resources
- Annual convention

Visit www.reading.org/ELACCSS
to preview sample chapters and see all the ways IRA can help you tackle the Common Core State Standards.

International Reading Association

New Research Thinking Girds Core

By Sarah D. Sparks

In the 15 years since the National Reading Panel convened, the knowledge base on literacy has grown

The truism that students "learn to read, then read to learn," has spawned a slew of early-reading interventions and laws. But the Common Core State Standards offer a very different view of literacy, in which fluency and comprehension skills evolve together throughout every grade and subject in a student's academic life, from the first time a toddler gums a board book to the moment a medical student reads data from a brain scan.

In doing so, the common-core literacy standards reflect the research world's changing evidence on expectations of student competence in an increasingly interconnected and digitized world. But critics say the standards also neglect emerging evidence on cognitive and reading strategies that could guide teachers on how to help students develop those literacy skills.

"In our knowledge-based economy, students are not only going to have to read, but develop knowledge-based capital. We need to help children use literacy to develop critical-thinking skills, problem-solving skills, making distinctions among different types of evidence," said Susan B. Neuman, a professor in educational studies specializing in early-literacy development at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. "The Common Core State Standards is privileging knowledge for the first time. To ensure they are career-and-college ready, we have to see students as lifelong learners and help them develop the knowledge-gathering skills they will use for the rest of their lives. That's the reality."

Response to Findings

It's been 15 years since Congress convened the National Reading Panel to distill knowledge about how students learn to read. That group, in the heat of the so-called "reading wars" between whole-language and phonics approaches to instruction, focused on five fundamental literacy skills: the word-decoding skills of phonemic awareness and phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. The panel's seminal 2000 report, "Teaching Children to Read," was used as the touchstone of the $1 billion-a-year federal Reading First grant program, established under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Eight years later, the U.S. Department of Education's research arm found that schools using Reading First did devote significantly more time to teaching the basic skills outlined by the panel, but ultimately "reduced the percentage of students engaged with print," both fiction and nonfiction. The study by the Institute of Education Sciences found students in Reading First schools were no better at drawing meaning from what they read than students at other schools, and the program eventually was scrapped.

"One of the things we're seeing with the common core is, there was general disappointment with the NRP report's five critical skills as part of the Reading First initiative," said Ms. Neuman, who was an assistant secretary of education during the first term of President George W. Bush, when the federal reading program was rolled out. "When the evaluation came out and the results were very modest, people said, 'Well, what's next, what do we do?' We have not seen the emergence of a new model, and now, that's on the verge of happening."

Peggy McCardle, the chief of the child development and behavior branch—which includes literacy research—at the National Institute on Child Health and Human Development, said comprehension became the "next great frontier of reading research" after the National Reading Panel. There have been other, narrowly focused panels on early reading and English-language learners, but the National Reading Panel still stands as the last comprehensive, Congressional task force on reading.

"What the National Reading Panel had to say about comprehension was, we do need to teach kids strategies, and it's better if you teach them in combination—and we've taken that much further," Ms. McCardle said. "While we don't have reading comprehension completely figured out in

COMPREHENSION AND THE STANDARDS

The Common Core State Standards take a holistic view of comprehension, asking students to derive meaning from a mix of texts, illustrations, and digital media at the same time.

"Our knowledge of comprehension is changing. We used to teach strategies, on the assumption that those strategies would translate to any text. Now we recognize that transferability has real problems; we need to teach in the context of the text," said Susan B. Neuman, a professor of educational studies specializing in early-literacy development at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

This is one area in which the standards have staked a position on the bleeding edge of research on learning, said Nell K. Duke, a professor of language, literacy, and culture at the University of Michigan School of Education in Ann Arbor. "How do you teach kids to read a diagram, how do you teach kids to read a time line? What typically goes wrong with reading a graphic?"

The common core's vision of how students ought to learn, grade by grade, to comprehend meaning differently across different media is sketched out in one strand of the reading standards—part of "integrating knowledge and ideas."

KINDERGARTEN: With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).

GRADE 1: Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

GRADE 2: Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

GRADE 3: Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).

GRADE 4: Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.

GRADE 5: Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

GRADE 6: Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

GRADE 7: Compare and contrast a text to an audio, video, or multimedia version of the text, analyzing each medium's portrayal of the subject (e.g., how the delivery of a speech affects the impact of the words).

GRADE 8: Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.

GRADES 9-10: Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

GRADES 11-12: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem. —S.D.S

IRA CONVENTION 2013

Looking for guidance on the many unique challenges presented by the Common Core State Standards?

With these sessions and so many more, you'll come away from IRA CONVENTION energized, enthusiastic, and ready to put these fantastic ideas to work right away in your classroom, school, and district!

INVITED SYMPOSIUM

Ruth Culham, Steve Layne, Danny Brassell, and Greg Tang

- Focuses on literacy in content areas as it relates to **Common Core State Standards** and **Texas STARR**

Look at these other exciting featured speakers who will address CCSS topics:

- Teaching Edge Session with Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey
- Invited Speaker Session with Lucy Calkins
- Featured IRA Authors Session with Maureen McLaughlin and Brenda Overturf

To review the full slate of Common Core sessions and to register, visit

www.iraconvention.org

Empowering Literacy Leaders. Developing Successful Readers.

IRA 58th Annual Convention

CelebratIng TeacheRs Making A Difference

SAN ANTONIO
April 19 - 22, 2013
Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center
San Antonio, Texas

every way, … we have it much more figured out than we did in 2000."

The common core's emphasis on more complex text with higher-level vocabulary at younger ages—and particularly the use of informational, non-narrative texts as opposed to overwhelmingly narrative texts—also puts into practice research showing that there is no bright line for when students start to read to learn, Ms. McCardle said. Setting one would be "an artificial distinction," she said, "because the ramp up to learning from reading starts earlier and is just that, a ramp-up, not a quick switch or a dichotomy."

Viewing comprehension as a sequential skill rather than a continuously evolving one "also implies they don't need ongoing instruction after 3rd grade, and we clearly know they do," she said.

The Alliance for Excellent Education's 2006 report "Reading Next" helped spark the common core's approach. Education professor Catherine A. Snow and then-doctoral student Gina Biancarosa of the Harvard Graduate School of Education found that explicit comprehension instruction, intensive writing, and the use of texts in a wide array of difficulty levels, subjects, and disciplines all helped improve literacy for struggling adolescent readers.

"There are two really big ideas underlying the common core," said P. David Pearson, a professor of language and literacy, society, and culture at the University of California, Berkeley. The standards first set out that children build knowledge through their close reading of texts, a concept "consistent with the last 20-30 years of research," Mr. Pearson said.

"But the second big idea is its grounding in the disciplines," Mr. Pearson added. "If you think of science and history and even literature as disciplines, you can see why they have separate standards in reading for literature, informational text, science, and technical areas. You're not just learning to read; you're learning to read within a rich content area. This reflects a huge refocusing of reading research in the last 10 to 15 years on reading in the disciplines. It's been timely; they've hit a theme in the realm of education policy and practice."

> **WE WERE SETTING EXPECTATIONS of such a modest level. … We were unintentionally holding them back, and the common core called us on that."**
>
> TIMOTHY SHANAHAN
> University of Illinois at Chicago

Content and Complexity

Mr. Pearson pointed to research by Cynthia L. Greenleaf, a co-director of the Strategic Literacy Initiative at the San Francisco-based research group WestEd, which identified specific literacy skills required in science and history classes.

Timothy Shanahan, the director of the Center for Literacy at the University of Illinois at Chicago and a member of the common-core literacy-standards committee, likewise has found differences not just in the content knowledge but the approach to reading and getting information from text by professional scientists and historians.

While "reading across the curriculum" research in the mid-1990s also stressed text in different content areas, Dorothy Strickland, a reading professor and education professor emeritus at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J., said the common core leverages emerging research on how students analyze and verify what they read in different types of text, from literature to a lab report or an Internet blog.

"One of the key elements of executive function is holding more than one thing at a time" in mind, she said. "Kids have to read across texts, evaluate them, respond to them all at the same time. In office work of any sort, people are doing this sort of thing all the time."

The "Reading Next" report also highlights labor studies that show the 25 fastest-growing professions from 2000-2010—computer software engineers, database administrators, and medical assistants, among them—require higher-than-average literacy skills, particularly in informational texts.

In a series of experiments across several grades beginning in 2000, Nell K. Duke, a professor of language, literacy, and culture at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, found elementary classrooms spend on average only 3.6 minutes a day reading non-story-based informational, as opposed to narrative texts. In classrooms with high numbers of poor children, informational reading occupies less than two minutes a day.

"Even if there hadn't been one stitch of research on informational text with young children, it's still conceivable the common core would have had an incredible emphasis on informational text because that was what colleges and employers were saying students needed to be able to read," Ms. Duke said. "Fortunately, there was a nice alignment between the concerns of researchers and the concerns of the college and business community."

The fundamentals discussed in the National Reading Panel are still there, too, but have been given different weight. For example, vocabulary gets much more attention in the common core, not just individual words, but their meanings in different contexts and the nuances in families of related words. In part, that's because a student's depth and complexity of vocabulary knowledge predicts his or her academic achievement better than other early-reading indicators, such as phonemic awareness.

"There was a big push on academic vocabulary and the discourse of the disciplines. It's likely come from that whole tradition of making sure kids not only have general academic language but deep vocabulary of history, social studies, science," Mr. Pearson of UC-Berkeley said.

The common core also marks a sea change in the way researchers and teachers think about a child's reading level. For example, in a 2010 study in the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, researchers assigned two groups of poor readers in grades 2 and 4 to practice reading aloud text either at or above their reading level; a third group, the control, had no additional practice. They found students who practiced reading, even when it was difficult, were significantly better 20 weeks later at reading rate, word recognition, and comprehension, in comparison with the control group.

"It flies in the face of everything we'd been doing. Since the 1940s, the biggest idiots in the field—like me—were arguing that you couldn't teach kids out of books they couldn't read," Mr. Shanahan said. "We were setting expectations of such a modest level of learning being possible. We were unintentionally holding them back, and the common core called us on that."

Standards and Grades

Ms. Strickland and Mr. Pearson said the common core's strength comes from integrating many factors that have been identified as vital to adult literacy—such as facility with complex text or academic vocabulary—across all grades and academic subjects. "I think the idea of 10 standards that play themselves out grade after grade across different disciplines is a powerful thing," Mr. Pearson said.

Still, researchers said, while individual standards are backed by evidence that students' level of mastery of them can predict their eventual literacy in college and work, there is much less research supporting the grade-level descriptors of how those skills look through the years, or the most effective instructional strategies

Title I whole-school reform in one proven package

What are you waiting for?
Get started at www.successforall.org

For more information,
call (800) 548-4998, ext. 2372,
or e-mail sfainfo@successforall.org

Success for All FOUNDATION®

Featured on:
NBC NEWS Education Nation

at each grade. Mr. Pearson said descriptors at transition grades, such as in upper elementary and middle school, may become the "Achilles heel of the standards."

"As you move through the grades, it changes in funny ways, and I don't think the changes are based on any actual research, but on professional consensus," Mr. Pearson said. "We may end up in the strange position of having a standard in 8th grade easier than one in 6th grade."

Mr. Shanahan agreed that "some of the targets are a little goofy," noting, for example, that the common core requires children to compare two texts in kindergarten, but there is no specific evidence that this skill should develop in that grade versus, say, grades 1 or 2. On the other hand, Mr. Shanahan said, "I think what the learning progressions tell us is a 4th grade teacher can no longer be a 4th grade teacher, or even a grades 3-4-5 teacher. They need to be a teacher of literacy and understand the precedents and antecedents of what a student needs to know."

Getting There From Here

Much of the criticism of the common core's research base comes from what it leaves out rather than what it includes.

In the years since the National Reading Panel, reading researchers have made significant advances in the development of strategies for reading and comprehension, as well as metacognitive factors that contribute to reading success, such as attention and motivation.

In its preface, the literacy standards bluntly limit their scope to "required achievements"—the outcomes of reading, as opposed to strategies for comprehension.

"The standards do not mandate such things as a particular writing process or the full range of metacognitive strategies that students may need to monitor and direct their thinking and learning," the common core states.

Rather, it says, teachers should use their professional judgment and experience to decide how to help students meet the standards.

"It's not because [the common-core designers] rejected that research," Mr. Shanahan said. "The notion was that you wanted to focus on outcomes, not the inputs. It might be helpful to teach a student whether he's paying attention or not, and if not, to do something. The common core isn't saying you shouldn't do that kind of thing, but that's not an outcome."

Maureen McLaughlin, the president-elect of the Newark, Del.-based International Reading Association, sees the lack of reading-strategy research in the curriculum as tantamount to having no research base where it counts most. "I see a gap between the standards and school curriculums, because typically when [previous] state standards were developed, they basically became the curriculum," said Ms. McLaughlin, who also chairs the reading department at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania. "If the states that adopted the common core say to their school districts, 'This is the curriculum,' and teachers feel they must teach to the test, the curriculum as it exists would not include the metacognitive strategies, the writing-process strategies... and that's a problem."

Ms. Neuman, the former assistant education secretary, disagrees. "I like the idea of focusing on outcomes," she said. "Comprehension strategies and metacognitive techniques have often been talked about as repair strategies, but you have to actually know you are not reading well to use those. So it's a little bit of a Catch-22 here. What this new approach is saying is focus on the text, because many remedial readers rely too much on their background knowledge and think they understand what they are reading when they actually do not."

The University of Michigan's Ms. Duke echoed the researchers' general concern that there has not been enough study of what good comprehension looks like and how to teach it in new contexts required by the common core, such as Internet articles, data tables, and texts that also include graphics.

"When a standard calls for us to get kids proficient at something we don't yet know how to get students proficient at, we really have to scramble a little bit," she said. "Hopefully, in a decade, we'll have really nice research on effective ways to go about this."

Mr. Shanahan agreed.

"I don't know of any studies or lines of research that might make us decide three or five years from now, let's take out these items or put these in," he said. "In many ways, the common core is silent on that. They're taking it on trust that we'll either know how to do it or we'll figure it out, and, as a field, I'm not sure we do know how to do it." ■

Coverage of "deeper learning" that will prepare students with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in a rapidly changing world is supported in part by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, at www.hewlett.org.

SpringBoard®

Prepare ALL students for college and career success… without remediation.

RIGOR AND READINESS
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATHEMATICS, GRADES 6-12.

Providing students access to academic rigor and the Common Core State Standards with...

- Fully integrated curriculum, assessments and professional development
- Flexible teaching and learning strategies
- Culturally relevant, engaging activities
- Knowledge and skills to succeed in AP® courses
- Vibrant peer-to-peer online professional learning community

To learn more about SpringBoard, go to **collegeboard.org/springboard** or call toll-free **877-999-7723.**

Recommended as a Curriculum of Exceptional Quality by **Phi Delta Kappa International.**

©2012 The College Board. College Board, AP, Pre-AP, SpringBoard and the acorn logo are registered trademarks of the College Board. inspiring minds is a trademark owned by the College Board.

CollegeBoard

Writing Undergoing Renaissance in Curricula

Its ascent stems from the common core, college feedback, and new research

By Catherine Gewertz

Teachers are focusing on writing instruction like never before. More and more, they're asking students to write about what they read, helping them think through and craft their work, and using such exercises as tools not only to build better writers, but to help students understand what they're studying.

The shift is still nascent, but people in the field are taking notice. It marks a departure from recent practice, which often includes little or no explicit writing instruction and only a modest amount of writing, typically in the form of stories, short summaries, or personal reflections, rather than essays or research projects on topics being studied.

In Oak Park, Mich., high school students are reading and rereading texts, taking notes on different features and levels of meaning each time, to inform their reading and discussion as well as the writing they will do about those texts.

First graders in South Strafford, Vt., are reading Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax*, for fun, then for greater understanding, and then to hunt for evidence. They look for events in the plot that illustrate how the whimsical protagonist tries to protect the Earth and assemble examples into a simple paragraph to support the theme of the story.

On a literacy landscape that rarely features explicit writing instruction, and where the writing that does take place is often unconnected to reading, experts say, these kinds of projects are unusual for the way they connect writing and reading. Attention to reading has persistently been high, they say, but a focus on writing has waxed and waned in the past few decades.

"Now we're seeing a lot more attention to the idea that writing about a text can improve reading about that text," said literacy expert Timothy Shanahan, the chairman of the department of curriculum and instruction at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Driving Change

Several forces are bringing about that change. One is the Common Core State Standards, which tie reading and writing together by placing a heavy emphasis on writing in response to one or more texts. Another—echoed in the stan-

dards—is feedback from college professors and employers, who bemoan young people's weakness in the analytical writing most needed in college and training for good jobs.

Research, too, is sparking reconsideration of the role writing can play in making better readers. "Writing to Read," a 2010 meta-analysis of 93 studies of writing interventions, found that writing had consistently positive effects on students' reading skills and comprehension. Writing about what they read was particularly helpful to students' comprehension, but so were taking notes on what they read, answering questions about it, and simply writing more often.

An expert panel brought together by the International Reading Association and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development concluded in a report earlier this year that reading and writing require "independent instruction." Too little still is known about the "reading-writing connection," the panel said, but it is sufficiently promising to warrant further research to inform classroom practice.

In 2010, the Newark, Del.-based IRA revised its standards for teacher preparation to include a greater emphasis on writing "as a way of emphasizing the importance of the reading-writing connection," said Rita M. Bean, who chaired that committee and is a professor emeritus of education at the University of Pittsburgh. A recent policy brief from the National Council of Teachers of English, based in Urbana, Ill., calls for having students write about and discuss complex texts and use those texts as models for writing.

Reading has occupied a higher profile than writing on the literacy landscape in part because of the focus on discrete reading skills that emanated from the National Reading Panel report in 2000, experts say, and the ensuing emphasis on those skills in the federally funded Reading First program and in state tests required under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Noting with alarm the growing gap, the National Commission on Writing in 2003 called for schools to double the amount of time they spent on writing.

"For all intents and purposes, 'literacy' became synonymous with 'reading,' and writing became the stepchild of literacy rather than an equal partner," said Andrés Henríquez, a program officer at the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which underwrote a string of studies on reading and writing, including "Writing to Read."

Students still spend little time writing in school. Teacher surveys by Steve Graham, the author of "Writing to Read," and colleagues show that students spend less than half an hour writing each day in elementary school, and much of what they write is lists and fill-in-the-blank answers to questions. Even at the high school level, seven in 10 teachers reported that their preservice training had not prepared them adequately to teach writing, and nearly half did not assign a single multiparagraph writing task per month.

"What we have, typically, is kids not writing more than a paragraph of text, all the way through high school," said Mr. Graham, a professor at Arizona State University in Tempe. "It's not very promising for writing or for writing instruction."

Poor Performance

Scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress reflect correspondingly lackluster writing skills. The report issued in September, for the 2011 exam, shows only one in four middle and high school students writing at the "proficient" level or better.

The national picture of student writing led the authors of the common standards to elevate its role in literacy instruction and to tie it closely to reading, not only in language arts classes but across the curriculum. Assessments for the standards, being designed by two groups of states, are expected to reflect those connections as well, with tasks that combine research and writing.

The idea, said Susan Pimentel, one of the lead authors of the standards, is to reduce writing "opinion untethered to evidence" and "decontextualized" writing—writing not based on the reading of a text—in favor of writing that requires students to read, comprehend, and respond to text, grounding their interpretations in evidence found there. That shift reflects what young people can expect in college and work, she said.

"In faculty and employer surveys, the kinds of skills that score high are the argument and evidence-related skills, developing ideas with relevant details and reasons," Ms. Pimentel said. "Telling stories scores very low. Expressing one's

Diana Leddy works with kindergartners and 1st graders at the Blue School to complete writing, reading, and drawing exercises using scenes from the Dr. Seuss book *The Lorax*. Built in 1858, the one-room schoolhouse in Landaff, N.H., is using the book as a way to fuse lessons in writing and reading.

FACING PAGE: Elise Tyler rewrites a scene from the book on a worksheet.

Wearing a mustache made of paper, Caleb Burns plays the role of the Lorax. Pupils took turns wearing the mustache and choosing their favorite scenes.

Photos by John Tully for Education Week

Robert McNelly shares his worksheet of a scene from *The Lorax* during a lesson in reading and writing at the Blue School, where children's literacy lessons include exploring and rewriting scenes from the book.

feelings, very low."

Increasingly, educators are seeing the need to make explicit connections between writing and reading and to teach genre-specific types of writing, said Barbara Cambridge, the policy director for the NCTE.

"Writing hasn't always been taught, especially outside of English/language arts classrooms," she said. "We know writing helps reading. But avid readers aren't necessarily good writers. This stuff has to be taught."

That's what Linda Denstaedt and her colleagues are trying to do as they craft K-12 curriculum units to reflect the standards in Michigan. At the core of their work at Oak Park High School is the "multidraft read," aimed at teaching students to delve into reading like writers, she said, which strengthens both their reading and their writing.

They read a text again and again, first to make sense of it and note their questions, as the teacher works the room to help, Ms. Denstaedt said. A second round of annotating focuses on looking for elements of the genre and how it works. They read again to spot structural decisions the writer made to create meaning, she said. The students then use what they learned in their own writing.

"All of this adds up to learning to read in layers, learning to read like a writer," said Ms. Denstaedt, the co-director of the Oakland Writing Project, which is a consultant to Michigan on the project and is an affiliate of the Berkeley, Calif.-based National Writing Project. "And you're learning how to read better as you write."

Too often, she said, writing is "all about doing tasks, assignments. We get students doing reading, and maybe writing, but we're not necessarily helping them learn how to think their way through a text."

Schools in Westerly, R.I., found that better writing can offer new ways to demonstrate knowledge. Dismal state science scores led the district to focus on writing and an inquiry-based approach to science instruction, and it paid off.

Only 49 percent of the 4th graders at State Street Elementary School scored proficient on the state science test in 2010, but 80 percent did in 2011. That number slid to 63 percent in 2012, said Principal Audrey Faubert, but she is still pleased with the improvement.

"Maybe they learned the science concepts better because they had to explain things," she said, "but I attribute it more to having a better way to show what they know, and that's important, too."

A math teacher in Brighton, Mich., found that writing had a powerful effect on helping her 6th grade students understand algebra concepts. Julie Mallia and a colleague from the English department, Don Pawloski, teamed up in spring 2009 to have students write 10-page "how to" books for the next fall's 6th graders. Drawing both on math and on writing instruction, students had to explain concepts such as solving a problem with x.

Many students reported understanding the math concepts better after writing the books, Ms. Mallia said, because their writing brought them face-to-face with the spots where their conceptual understandings were weak. And it opened up a valuable formative-assessment tool.

"I was really surprised at how many students who were able to get the right answers realized in trying to write the books that they didn't get the ideas behind them," she said. "That gave me a chance to work with them and reteach what they didn't understand."

'A Strong Tie'

Writing is poised to occupy a heftier role in the College Board's Advanced Placement program. In 15 schools, the organization is piloting two courses that, if completed along with three other AP classes, will lead to a new "capstone" credential.

A critical-reasoning course, taken during the junior year, includes a major research project that demands a 3,000-word group paper and a 1,200-word individual paper, said John Williamson, the project's senior director. Students must also do a 15-minute written and multimedia presentation. The end-of-year exam will require three or four 500-word essays, he said. The senior-year course is in research-methodology, culminating in a 20-page paper.

"There is a strong tie between reading and writing all the way through these courses," he said. "When students write about what they read, they come to new understandings about it. And it's bigger than just the writing; it's about communicating your disciplinary understanding to different audiences."

Diana Leddy and Joey Hawkins, the teachers who developed the writing approach used with *The Lorax*, said the root of it is using writing to deepen understanding.

"To be able to write well, you need to understand the material well, and to do that, you need to be a good reader," said Ms. Leddy. She and Ms. Hawkins work as consultants, primarily in New England schools, and also for the New York City-based nonprofit Student Achievement Partners, whose founding partners co-led the writing of the English/language arts common standards.

Ms. Leddy's and Ms. Hawkins' method reinterprets a tenet that has been central to many in literacy instruction.

"It's been an axiom that children should write about what they know," Ms. Leddy said. "That can mean writing from personal experience. But our interpretation is that we can help them know something, and that opens up a lot of areas for them."

A memoir, a speech at a memorial service, and a college essay all offer testament to the need to know how to write from personal experience, said Ms. Hawkins. But "it's a tremendous missed opportunity if all a kid writes about is what he knows."

Accordingly, when Ms. Leddy teaches *The Lorax*, she walks through the text repeatedly with students, discussing it from a different angle each time. When they're through, students learn to write short "hand paragraphs," with the thumb as the topic sentence—the Lorax cares for the Earth—followed by three examples of how he does that and a "pinky sentence" restating the interpretation.

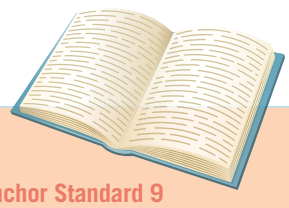
Catherine Snow, a literacy expert and professor of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in Cambridge, Mass., welcomes the shift to text-based writing, saying that personal narrative has been overemphasized in most language arts classrooms.

But the risk in focusing writing exclusively on text, she said, is that many students will not be interested enough in the reading to analyze it. The text-based skills can be taught, though, through topics and texts carefully chosen to engage students, Ms. Snow said.

In a Harvard project being developed in several districts in Maryland and Massachusetts, 4th through 7th graders tackle topics that fire them up, such as whether Tater Tots should be served in the cafeteria, Ms. Snow said. Such questions drive them back to their readings to search for information they can use to build well-founded arguments, she said. ■

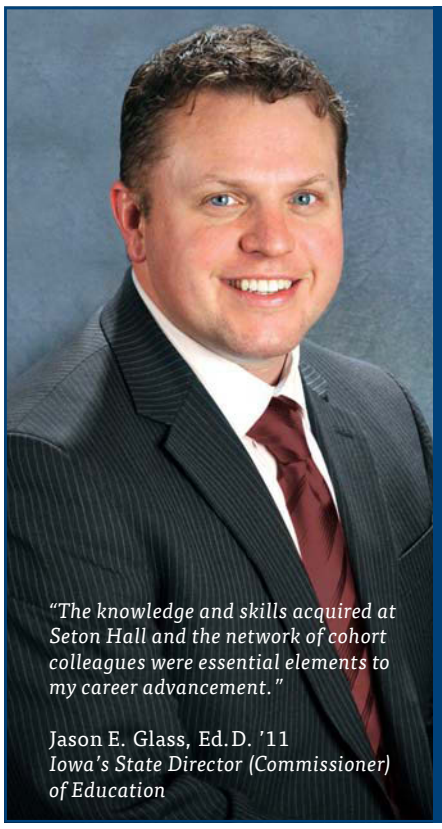
Coverage of "deeper learning" that will prepare students with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in a rapidly changing world is supported in part by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, at www.hewlett.org.

For a link to resources about writing, go to www.edweek.org/links.



Anchor Standard 9 in Writing:
"Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research."

SOURCE: Common Core State Standards



A Fast Track **Traditional Ed.D.**

Why more administrators have chosen **Seton Hall University's Executive Ed.D. Program:**

- National/International Reputation
- Dissertation Starts on Day One
- Cohort Model of 30 Students
- Intensive 2-year program: 10 Weekends, Two 4 week Summer sessions.
- Personal Care and Support

Now Accepting Applications for Cohort XVII

For more information, call 1-800-313-9833, email *execedd@shu.edu*, or go to **www.shu.edu/go/execedd.**

College of Education and Human Services
Seton Hall University
400 South Orange Ave. • South Orange, NJ 07079

learning.com

Are your digital natives digitally literate?

More than ever, students need digital literacy skills to meet **Common Core** State Standards and prepare for **next generation assessments**.

Learning.com's complete digital literacy solutions include:

EasyTech – Builds students' technology proficiency and 21st century skills

21st Century Skills Assessment – Identifies learning gaps and recommends EasyTech lessons to address student needs.

WayFind – Helps teachers assess their 21st century teaching skills, and prescribes PD for improvement.

Visit www.learning.com/digital-literacy to explore our solutions today.

Photos by Greg Kahn for Education Week

CLASSROOM PREPARATION: Prekindergartners at Calvin Rodwell Elementary School in Baltimore, above, listen to their teacher, Erika Parker, as she reads *A Day at the Pumpkin Patch*, a nonfiction book about visiting a farm. The book is part of a unit that aims to blend the reading of stories and nonfiction with learning outside the classroom. The day after the children read the book, they visited Summers Farm in Frederick, Md.

IN THE FIELD: From left, Nalani Williams, Joshua Johnson-Bey, and Unique Childs, all 4, select pumpkins to take home from Summers Farm.

Scales Tip Toward Nonfiction Under the Common Core

College and workplace demands are propelling the shift in text

The common standards expect students to become adept at reading informational text, a shift in focus that many English/language arts teachers fear might diminish the time-honored place of literature in their classrooms.

In schools nationwide, where all but four states have adopted the Common Core State Standards, teachers are finding ways to incorporate historical documents, speeches, essays, scientific articles, and other nonfiction into classes.

The new standards envision elementary students, whose reading typically tilts toward fiction, reading equally from literature and informational text. By high school, literature should represent only 30 percent of their readings; 70 percent should be informational. The tilt reflects employers' and college professors' complaints that too many young people can't analyze or synthesize information, or document arguments.

Some passionate advocates for literature, however, see reason for alarm. In a recent paper issued by the Pioneer Institute, a Boston-based group that opposes the standards, two language arts experts argue that those distributions make it inevitable that less literature will be taught in schools. Even if social studies, science, and other teachers pick up much of the informational-text reading, co-authors Sandra Stotsky and Mark Bauerlein argue, language arts teachers will have to absorb a good chunk as well, and they will be the ones held accountable.

"It's hard to imagine that low reading scores in a school district will force grade 11 government/history and science teachers to devote more time to reading instruction," the paper says.

De-emphasizing literature in the rush to build informational-text skills is shortsighted, the study argues, because the skills required to master good, complex literature serve students well in college and challenging jobs. The problem is worsened when teachers make "weak" choices of informational texts, such as blog posts, Mr. Bauerlein said in an interview.

"If we could ensure that the kinds of stuff they're choosing are essays by [Ralph Waldo] Emerson or Booker T. Washington's *Up From Slavery*, then that would be wonderful," said Mr. Bauerlein, a professor of English at Emory University in Atlanta. "Those are complex texts, with the literary features that make students better readers in college."

The only required readings in the standards are four foundational American writings, such as the Declaration of Independence, and one play each by Shakespeare and by an American dramatist. Students also must "demonstrate knowledge" of American literature from the 18th through early-20th centuries.

An appendix to the standards lists texts that illustrate the range of works students should read across the curriculum to acquire the skills outlined in the standards. Those titles are not required reading, but are being widely consulted as representations of what the standards seek.

Stories, poetry, and plays share space with nonfiction books and articles. Kindergarten teachers are offered Tana Hoban's *I Read Signs,* along with P.D. Eastman's *Are You My Mother?* For 4th and 5th grades, the standards suggest Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* as well as Joy Hakim's *A History of US*. Middle school suggestions include Winston Churchill's 1940 "Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat" speech and an article on elementary particles from the *New Book of Popular Science* along with *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. For 11th and 12th graders, T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is suggested, as are Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point* and Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*.

A New Blend

Taking a cue from the standards, many teachers are blending fiction and informational reading as they phase in the common core.

At Calvin Rodwell Elementary School in Baltimore last month, Erika Parker and her class of 4- and 5-year-olds were planning a trip to a nearby farm as part of a unit called "fall fun with friends." She read the children two versions of *The Three Little Pigs;* they joined her to shout out the famous refrain: "Not by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin!" They were addressing a common-core expectation that they learn to compare points of view in multiple texts, Ms. Parker said.

She also read the children books and stories about fall weather, friendship, the life cycle of pumpkins, and how to grow apples. They ventured into the schoolyard to learn about tree trunks and limbs and how trees could be grafted to produce new varieties and colors of apples.

"We are certainly still reading works of fiction," she said later. "They love their stories. But they also really get excited about something in real life that they can make a connection to."

Quinton M. Lawrence, too, is trying out a new blend with his 5th and 6th graders at the K-8 Woodhome Elementary/Middle School in Baltimore. The language arts teacher is drawing on newspaper articles, novels, and poems to explore the theme of individuality.

Children are choosing from a range of novels with a "realistic feel," Mr. Lawrence said, including *House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, *Seedfolks* by Paul Fleischman, and *The Skin I'm In* by Sharon Flake. They read newspaper articles about a school uniform rule and the creation of avatars—virtual alter egos—in video games.

Through discussion, the students zeroed in on 10 major components of individuality, such as intelligence, beliefs, and physical appearance, and they explored them through the real and imaginary characters they read about, Mr. Lawrence said. They will write two-page essays exploring the theme further, based on additional research from other articles online, he said.

"The idea that students are exposed to informational text is somehow taken for granted," said Mr. Lawrence, whose district serves a predominantly low-income, minority population. "Most of my kids have not been exposed to newspaper articles. Their parents don't subscribe to magazines. So it's good for them to see these kinds of things, learn about their structure, as well as the structure of novels."

Sonja B. Santelises, the chief academic officer of the Baltimore system, which has been working with teachers districtwide to design common-core modules and sets of texts in social studies, science, and language arts, said the emphasis on informational reading is crucial as a matter of equity for her 83,000 students.

"We're naïve if we don't acknowledge that it's through nonfiction that a lot of students who've never been to a museum are going to read about mummies for the first time or read about the process of photosynthesis," she said. She considers it important to use informational readings simultaneously as tools to build content knowledge

By Catherine Gewertz

For links to more information about the balance of fiction and nonfiction in the common standards, go to www.edweek.org/links.

EXPANDED BOOKSHELVES

The Common Core State Standards require students to read many "informational" texts along with novels, poetry, and plays. An appendix to the standards lists dozens of titles to illustrate the range of suggested reading. Some "exemplar" texts can be found on the bookshelf.

SOURCE: Common Core State Standards, Appendix B

Anchor Standard 10 in Reading: "Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently."

and to familiarize students with a variety of types of text.

When Ms. Santelises visits classrooms, she still sees plenty of literature being enjoyed, so she isn't worried about fiction losing its place in school, she said. "Fiction and narrative have been so overrepresented, particularly in the elementary grades, that I feel this is more of a balancing than a squeezing-out."

In a study that painted a portrait of that imbalance, Michigan literacy researcher Nell K. Duke found in 2000 that informational text occupied only 3.6 minutes of a 1st grader's day and 10 percent of the shelf space in their classroom libraries.

The Role of Literature

In the rush to rebalance, however, educators risk cheating literature, some experts say. "The emphasis on nonfiction is leading to the development of a whole new universe of activities that will leave less time for the ones about literature," said Arthur N. Applebee, a professor of education at the State University of New York in Albany.

Thomas Newkirk, a professor of English at the University of New Hampshire, said he thinks the common core's "bias against narrative" doesn't serve students well. If teachers seek to make students ready for real life, he said, they must equip them not only to argue, interpret, and inform, but to convey emotion and tell stories.

"The world is much more narrative than the standards suggest," said Mr. Newkirk, who teaches writing to freshmen and trains preservice teachers.

"Think about when candidates are running for office, and they have to tell the stories of their lives, the story of where we are going as a nation," he said. "When we honor someone who has passed away, someone who is retiring, we need to tell their story. The other skills are important, too. But in the real world, there are moments when we have to distill emotion, experience. To claim otherwise misrepresents how we operate."

The question of which faculty are responsible for the new informational-text expectations is permeating conversation.

Colette Bennett, the chairman of the English department at Wamogo High School in Litchfield, Conn., said she believes the standards allow her to keep her focus squarely on literature, with essays and other nonfiction used to enrich that study. Recently, she had students use "The Hero's Journey," a narrative framework designed by American mythology scholar Joseph Campbell, to help them interpret *King Lear*, she said.

"The standards say that 30 percent of a student's reading in [high] school should be literary, which is as it should be," she said. "That's my responsibility. My purview is fiction, poetry, literary nonfiction, and no other teacher is going to teach that."

But teachers of other subjects have not been asking their students to read enough, Ms. Bennett said. "I hear them saying, 'Oh, what am I going to drop out of my course to do more reading?' And I say, 'What? You haven't been doing a lot of reading all along?' "

More Time on Reading

To avoid sacrificing literature and still give students deep experience with informational text, one thing will be required, according to Carol Jago, a former president of the National Council of Teachers of English: more time.

"Teachers don't have to give up a single poem, play, or novel," said Ms. Jago, who now directs the California Reading and Literature Project at the University of California, Los Angeles, which helps teachers design lesson plans. "But students are going to have to read four times as much as they are now."

Where will the time come from? From substituting good-quality reading for "busywork," movies shown in class, and the hours students spend daily on electronic entertainment such as texting and playing video games, Ms. Jago said.

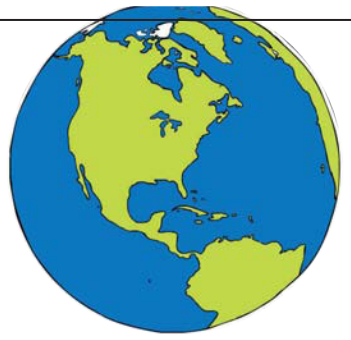
In sorting out how to put the standards into practice, some experts caution against an either-or interpretation. It's important for students to be steeped in all kinds of reading and writing, they say, and it's all possible with good planning and collaboration.

"I don't know why this dichotomy has been constructed in a way that is so divisive. It's very unhelpful," said Stephanie R. Jones, a professor who focuses on literacy and social class at the University of Georgia in Athens.

"We shouldn't teach kindergartners as if they're going to join the workforce next year. But it won't hurt us to make sure we are emphasizing nonfiction a little more in K-5. And I don't think fiction has to be edged out at all," she said.

"In some college and career paths, it's important to state a claim and justify with evidence, and in others, it's important to be really creative and innovative and not start with an argument, but have open inquiry and move toward some kind of discovery." ■

Coverage of the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the common assessments is supported in part by a grant from the GE Foundation, at www.ge.com/foundation.



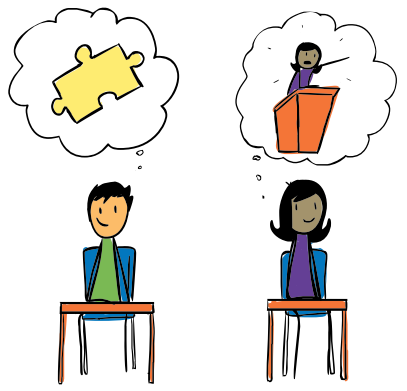
Developing World-Class Students

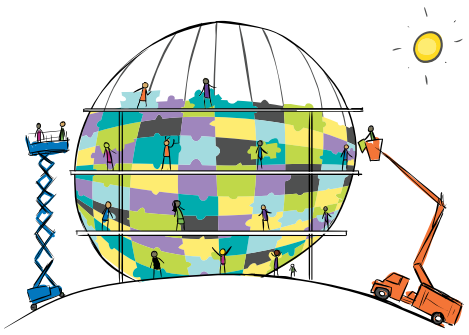
Getting ready for the 21st century with Common Core

When students sit in classrooms today,
they are preparing for a future where they will be
competing globally for careers that don't even exist today.

How do we prepare students for this future?

That's what the Common Core State Standards are all about...
helping students think for themselves, tackle
real-world problems, and defend their conclusions.





It's a lot of work—this takes educators,
parents, students, and business
working to bring it all together.

And, CTB/McGraw-Hill can help you...

Assessment. Instruction. Reporting.

The world our students face will require their best.
It's up to all of us to help them every step of the way.

To learn more about how CTB can help, visit **CTB.com/CommonCore**

Copyright © 2012 by CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC. All rights reserved.

McGraw Hill CTB
HELP THE TEACHER HELP THE CHILD

Literacy Instruction Expected To Cross the Curriculum

Teachers of science, social studies, and other subjects to engage students in reading, writing

The 4th graders in Mason A. Kuhn's classroom recently wrapped up an unusual assignment: Write a science-themed book and make the target audience not their teacher but 2nd graders at Shell Rock Elementary in northeastern Iowa.

One student wrote and illustrated a cartoon about a feline named Space Kat trying to figure out how to power up her rocket ship to get back home. Along the way, the story explored concepts such as gravity and friction.

At Lewis County High School in Vanceburg, Ky., science teacher Sara M. Poeppelman asks her chemistry students to closely read and analyze an essay Albert Einstein penned in 1946 for a popular science magazine.

The two science-related assignments dovetail with the call in the Common Core State Standards to teach literacy across the curriculum. The English/language arts standards adopted by all but four states specifically highlight the teaching of reading, writing, and other literacy objectives in science, history/social studies, and technical subjects.

Around the nation, education leaders are grappling with how best to help teachers and schools reflect this cross-disciplinary dimension. If not exactly a new idea, educators and experts say the standards offer a clear articulation of the notion—including detailed learning objectives—and may well spark an expanded and more deliberate emphasis in schools.

In fact, the standards say students should read equal amounts of fiction and nonfiction "informational texts" in elementary school, and by high school, the balance should tip to 70 percent nonfiction. *(See related story, Page S15.)*

In a sign that word is getting out, more than two-thirds of some 400 science teachers who replied to a recent online survey from the National Science Teachers Association said they're being asked by administrators to spend class time on the common core's objectives for reading in science.

Mr. Kuhn sees a natural nexus. "So much of science is reading and writing and communicating about what you discover," he said.

Kathleen A. Hogan, a social studies coordinator for the Lexington-Richland district, near Columbia, S.C., said she welcomes the attention in the common core to her discipline.

"We've been doing this all along if we were doing good social studies teaching," she said.

Last month, the South Carolina education department hosted a best-practices seminar on teaching literacy across the curriculum under the common core.

Lewis E. Huffman, an education associate for social studies at the state agency, said one challenge is helping to clarify "what's going to be expected and required" of social studies and ELA teachers, noting that he sees some misunderstanding among those who teach both subjects.

"If we can get more of that cross-fertilization between English/language arts and social studies teachers, this is going to be beneficial to both disciplines," he said.

But he admits it won't be easy, noting that, oftentimes, teachers in those disciplines don't collaborate. "It's going to require some sitting down and working together," he said.

Hundreds of Examples

The common standards for English/language arts espouse a vision of literacy instruction that involves virtually all teachers.

"The standards insist that instruction in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language be a shared responsibility within the school," the document says.

In grades K-5, the literacy objectives across disciplines are embedded with the rest of the ELA expectations. But for grades 6-12, there's a special seven-page section, "Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects." *(See chart, Page S20.)*

For example, it calls for students to compare and contrast treatment of a topic in several primary and secondary sources, and determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and phrases as used in a scientific or technical context.

The standards document has an appendix with nearly 150 examples of informational texts, or "text exemplars," that might be used, organized by subject and grade level, such as Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address," Thomas Paine's "Common Sense," and an article, "Amusement Park Physics," from *Scientific American*. There's even an excerpt of federal guidelines for home insulation with a table of information.

Several educators praised the appendix as a valuable resource to help teachers get started.

Ms. Hogan from the Lexington-Richland district said that at a recent meeting of school department chairs in the social studies, "I pulled out all the exemplars that match the social studies standards." She wanted those attending to "have a whole list of the kinds of informational texts, the kinds of primary sources that the common core is expecting kids to have an opportunity to ... do a close read on," she said.

Under revisions to South Carolina's social studies standards finalized last year, Mr. Huffman said, one addition was a suggested set of social studies literacy skills, some of which were derived from the common core.

At the same time, a set of common science standards being developed by 26 states—in collaboration with educators and experts—are expected to reflect an emphasis on literacy goals.

A framework for the standards, crafted by a National Research Council panel, spotlights the issue and explicitly references the common core. "Reading, interpreting, and producing text are fundamental practices of science in particular," the NRC says, "and they constitute at least half of engineers' and scientists' total working time."

Science reading is often challenging for several reasons, the NRC says, including the use of unfamiliar "jargon," complex sentence structure, and different modes of representation, such as diagrams, charts, and symbols. From reading to writing, the NRC says, "every science or engineering lesson is in part a language lesson."

E=MC²

Several science education experts say they've encountered resistance from some secondary science teachers to the notion that it's also their job to teach reading and writing.

But Ms. Poeppelman, the Kentucky science teacher, said it's nothing new to her. Literacy, she explained, has long been viewed as a schoolwide affair for her school and district.

"Even before the common-core standards, we had that mindset in our building," she said. "But now with the common-core standards," she added, teachers are taking it "up a notch."

One big change, she said, is that students are expected to tackle a higher level of text complexity than before. "You're basically bumping up things by two years in a lot of cases," she said.

By Erik W. Robelen

Bruce Crippen for Education Week

That's what led her to introduce Einstein's article for *Science Illustrated* magazine, "E=MC²: The Most Urgent Problem of Our Time."

Using the text is "one of the best ways that we have found" to address content goals in a unit on nuclear chemistry, Ms. Poeppelman said, while also "incorporating and weaving in common-core-standards goals." In particular, she identified two reading standards, one on analyzing text structure, the other on author's purpose.

She typically spends four to five classroom periods on the article, which is read along with another piece published on the PBS website in 2005 about the legacy of E=MC².

To help students with the Einstein article, she engages the class in a close-reading approach that asks them to read one paragraph at a time and summarize it before moving on.

But Ms. Poeppelman is strategic about when to introduce such texts. "We try to be judicious and smart about it," she said.

She also spends considerable time on writing. A recent chemistry assignment explored the use of X-ray scanners in airports to combat terrorism. Each student researched and wrote a paper making the case for or against the technology, focusing on scientific debates over potential health risks and alternatives.

"They're coming up with their thesis and supporting their claim with evidence and using citations, which is all in the common-core standards," Ms. Poeppelman said.

In Mr. Kuhn's 4th grade class in Shell Rock, Iowa, a recent science unit culminated with the writing assignment for a younger audience.

"They have to break it down and explain it in a way their audience would understand," he said. "Science has such difficult vocabulary, and a kid can memorize vocabulary words and match them up on a quiz and completely forget."

The task is informed by his participation for several years in a project to promote the Science Writing Heuristic, or SWH, an approach that uses language and argumentation to teach science, and that promotes critical-thinking skills. Recent state and federal grants have supported the SWH, including a U.S. Department of Education award in 2009 of $4.8 million to field test it in 48 Iowa elementary schools.

Brian M. Hand, a professor of science education at the University of Iowa and a co-developer of the SWH, said Mr. Kuhn's technique in the assignment fits with this approach to writing as "an act of learning."

He explained, "We use writing as a learning tool, not writing as a recording tool."

Mr. Kuhn is now sharing his experience with the SWH with fellow teachers in the 2,300-student Waverly-Shell Rock district.

Bridgette Wagoner, the district's director of educational services, said the SWH is the focus of one of the four strands of professional development that her district currently offers teachers as they work to implement the common core.

She said she likes the approach because it is "literacy intensive" and embraces "an inquiry-based science approach" that engages students "as scientists in the work of asking and answering questions."

In Boise, Idaho, history and social studies teachers recently got a dose of professional development to get a firmer grasp on the common core's literacy objectives.

"We expect all of our history and social studies teachers to implement [them]," said Russ Heller, an education services supervisor for the 25,000-student district.

One goal of the workshop was to ease teachers' anxiety about the common core, he said, noting that most of the district's history and social studies teachers already bring a literacy focus to instruction.

"It's not a matter of doing these things, but doing them with diligence," he said, "intentionally, consistently, and in the right way."

Mr. Heller highlighted the standards' explicit reference to such matters as fostering close reading, understanding the difference between claims and evidence, building persuasive and reasoned arguments, and communicating clearly.

"The effort is to create a culture in which every day, a teacher walks into the classroom ... conscientiously applying these principles," he said.

'Historical Context'

Fritz Fischer, a past president of the National Council for History Education, said the common core meshes well with a push in history education over the past 15 to 20 years to

FROM TOP:
Sara Poeppelman, a science teacher at Lewis County High School in Vanceburg, Ky., incorporates reading and writing activities into her lessons.

In one experiment, students expose pea seeds that are in their germination stage to light. Then they write about their conclusions.

focus more on the ability to understand primary and secondary texts and the differences between them, and on making use of them in writing to provide evidence and argument.

"I'm glad they've given a nod to history, and at least recognized its importance and the fact that it is unique," he said.

At the same time, Mr. Fischer, a history professor at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, has concerns with the standards.

"They are much too narrow and incomplete" when it comes to literacy in history, he said. "There is so much more to reading historical texts than is in that section, and some of it leans too much toward literacy and not enough toward issues of historical context."

Another concern Mr. Fischer has is whether teachers who lack history expertise will get the support they need to effectively teach more history texts, such as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s, "Letter from Birmingham Jail," which is cited as a text exemplar in the appendix.

"I'm afraid that an elementary teacher who doesn't have any training in or understanding of history will just go to Wikipedia, and that will be their historical context," he said.

Several other experts also offered cautions about implementation.

"With science and literacy, don't force the issue," said Christine A. Roye, a professor of science education at Shippensburg University in Shippensburg, Pa. "There will be natural places where it will be a great match. ... Maximize those [rather than] trying to make everything connected."

Dennis L. Schatz, a program director at the National Science Foundation who is on leave from the Pacific Science Center in Seattle, said he hopes the standards don't lead some teachers to move away from valued science practices.

"The basic idea is great," he said of the science-literacy connection in the standards, "but the reading [focus] could easily make people think, 'Oh, I don't have to do hands-on science.' "

More broadly, he said: "It's easy to talk about integration, but the challenge is making that model come alive." ■

Coverage of the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the common assessments is supported in part by a grant from the GE Foundation, at www.ge.com/foundation.

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

"Note on range and content of student reading," in the Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects:

"Reading is critical to building knowledge in history/social studies as well as in science and technical subjects. College- and career-ready reading in these fields requires an appreciation of the norms and conventions of each discipline, such as the kinds of evidence used in history and science; an understanding of domain-specific words and phrases; an attention to precise details; and the capacity to evaluate intricate arguments, synthesize complex information, and follow detailed descriptions of events and concepts."

The Common Core State Standards include a seven-page section for grades 6-12 explicitly on literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.

Grades 6-8 Excerpts

- Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.
- Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Grades 9-10 Excerpts

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 9-10 texts and topics.
- Conduct short [and] more sustained research projects to answer a question ... or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject.

Grades 11-12 Excerpts

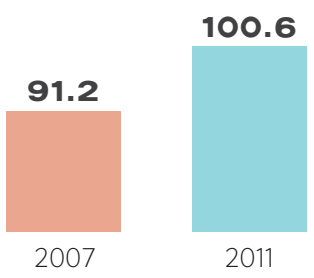
- Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.
- Synthesize information from a range of sources (e.g. texts, experiments, simulations) into a coherent understanding of a process, phenomenon, or concept, resolving conflicting information when possible.
- Develop and strengthen writing ... by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant.

SOURCE: Common Core State Standards

"K12 helps us be part of this new model of education happening across the nation."

Danielle Prohaska
Director of Teaching and Learning
Mechanicsburg Exempted Village School District, Ohio

AWARDED OHIO BOARD OF EDUCATION'S EXCELLENT WITH DISTINCTION

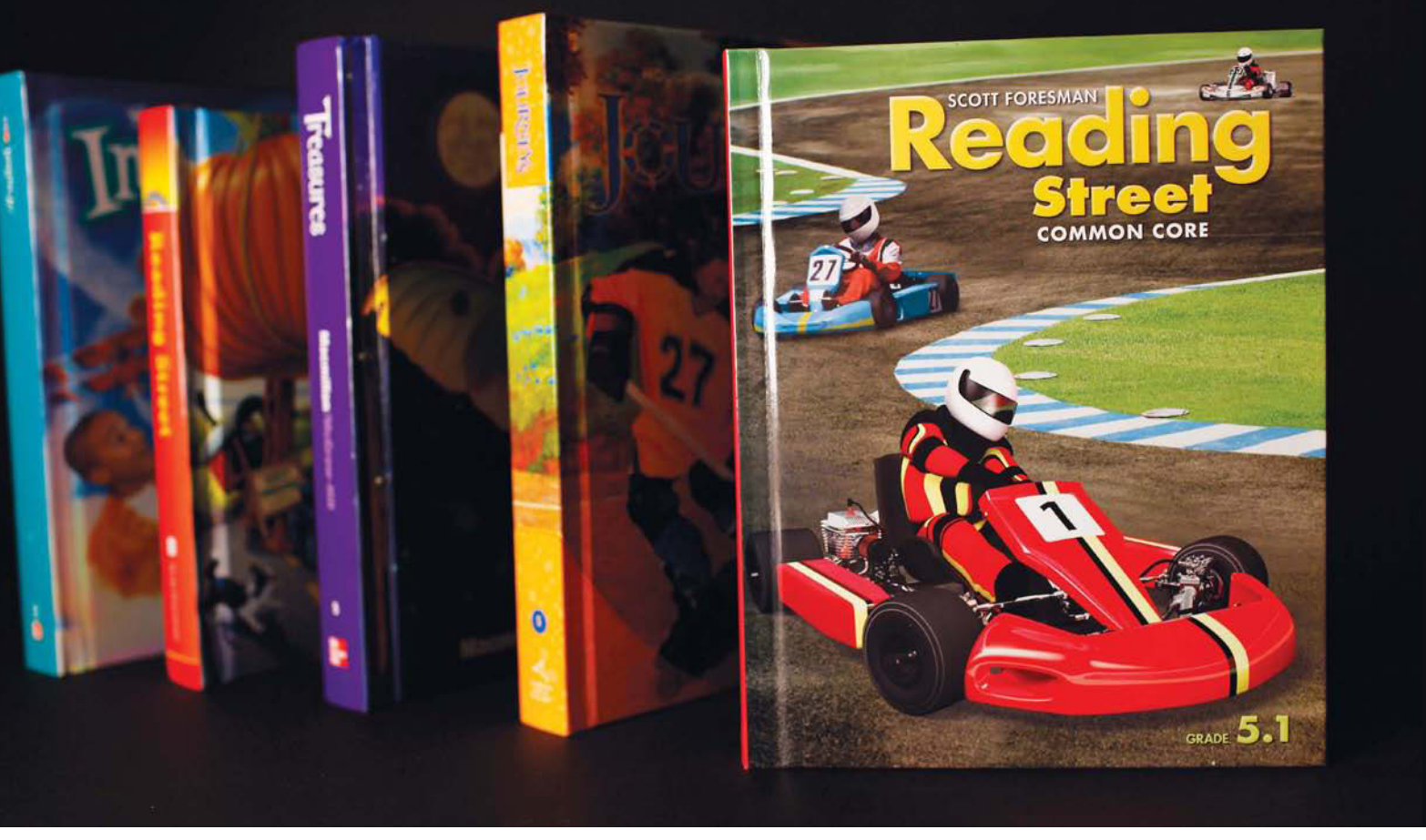


In August 2007, this district decided to implement comprehensive online learning for all students. Integrating the A+nyWhere Learning System by K12 into its classrooms made a major contribution to achieving **OHIO'S HIGHEST PERFORMANCE RATING AND AYP.**

K12 has partnered with over 2,000 districts in all 50 states, with 550 proven online courses delivered in virtual, blended, and classroom models. How can we partner with you to achieve your goals?

Call for a free consultation:
866.912.8588.
Visit: **K12.com/educators**

DOWNLOAD OUR FREE CASE STUDY
Mechanicsburg, OH: Individualized Learning is Key to Success at **K12.com/mechanicsburg**



Differences can be seen in the 5th grade reading series that publishers produced in response to the common core.

Nicole Frugé/Education Week

New Texts Aim to Capture Standards

By Stephen Sawchuk

Retooled basals rely more on documentation and analysis and less on personal experience

The two 5th grade volumes of McGraw Hill's Treasures reading series at first glance look remarkably similar.

Both include, for instance, a nonfiction selection about a scientific mission to Antarctica, coupled with snippets from a researcher's journal. But there are subtle differences in what they ask students to think about as they read. The older edition, from 2008, merely asks them to explain the value of keeping a journal. The newer one, from 2011, asks the students to explain how "sensory details and other language" differ between a primary source, such as the journal, and a secondary source, such as the narrative.

In the 2013 version of its Reading Street series, Pearson officials have excised "reader response" questions and replaced them with prompts asking students to "use examples from the text to justify your answer."

From analyzing text features, to citing evidence, to de-emphasizing personal responses to readings, such changes nod in the direction of the Common Core State Standards' English/language arts expectations.

All three of the major K-12 educational publishers have unveiled new basal-reading programs that purport to embody the standards, and supplemented older series, in order to claim that their products are "aligned," "compliant," or "coherent" with the common standards.

Yet a crucial question remains: Are the changes sufficient?

It is quite literally a multimillion-dollar question, one whose answer could shape the education publishing industry for years. Publishing officials estimate that upwards of 75 percent of the elementary curriculum market in reading remains dependent on basal textbooks.

Alignment Puzzle

The idea of alignment between curricular materials and content standards in reading has always been a bit fuzzy, according to experts who have studied reading programs.

"Publishers are very adept at correlating the standards to the instruction in their programs," said Peter Dewitz, a professor of education at Mary Baldwin College, in Staunton, Va., and a former basal-reading-program author. "They can issue a page of correlations that illustrate what they're doing, but if you look really closely, you'll find that it's a shallower interpretation of that standard than what the [standards] writers intended."

Where the common core is concerned, curricular alignment matters because many of its English/language arts expectations—close reading, writing to source texts, using a rich vocabulary to build students' background knowledge—are as new to educators as to students. Alignment, in that sense, is more than materials. It's also about making sure they are structured in ways that help instructors make use of the materials.

"It is really, really hard work," said Kate Gerson, a senior fellow for Educator Engagement and the Common Core for the Regents Research Fund, a nonprofit organization that works hand in hand with the New York state education department. "We are really struggling and celebrating as we toil to make sure the materials we are producing will support teachers in their implementation of the standards, while leaving room for them to adapt and improve, and to inhabit texts in a very different way with students."

Using federal Race to the Top funds, the state has started a collaboration with two smaller publishers, Expeditionary Learning and the Core Knowledge Foundation, to craft a comprehensive K-2 curriculum and modules for grades 3-5, which it will share with other states.

For this story, *Education Week* obtained and reviewed the 5th grade volumes of the

A MARKET IN TRANSITION

All three of the largest K-12 publishers have put out new core reading series or editions that purport to embody the Common Core State Standards, highlighted in red. They also offer enhancements and supplements for their older curricula.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT
Journeys Common Core (2014)
Journeys (2011)
StoryTown (2008)

MCGRAW-HILL
Reading Wonders (2013)
Treasures (2011, 2009)
Imagine It! (2008)

PEARSON
Reading Street Common Core (2013)
Reading Street (2011, 2008)

SOURCE: *Education Week*

three major publishing houses' basal programs, comparing them where possible with volumes written before the final draft of the standards was published, in June 2010. They include Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's Journeys, from 2011; Pearson's Reading Street, from 2008 and 2013; and McGraw-Hill's Treasures, from 2009 and 2011. (McGraw-Hill also offers a new basal series, Reading Wonders, and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt a new edition of Journeys, but full volumes of those products were not available for review.)

Great Expectations

As one of the few highly visible vetting processes for curricula, textbook adoption offers a window into the thorny topic of curricular alignment.

Fewer than half the states have a formal textbook-adoption or -review process, but among them are states with a large K-12 population, such as Florida. And there are already signs that the common standards are beginning to change how reading curricula are vetted, with many states drawing on the "publishers' criteria," a document crafted by two of the lead writers of the standards.

For its current English/language arts adoption, Florida built its evaluation framework on more than 100 pages of specifications drawn from the common standards and the publishers' criteria. Among the state's demands: Publishers must provide both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis of the complexity of each text selection in their basal series.

Using Lexiles and other quantitative ways of measuring text complexity is already common, but analyzing them subjectively is another matter. That requirement demands attention to such features as whether a story is told in flashbacks rather than chronologically, or contains several levels of meaning, as in satire or parody.

The criteria "reflect what we wanted to be able to work with teachers on," said Stuart Greenberg, a former Florida department of education employee who helped design the evaluation tool. "Teachers had a lot of good PD on strategy work—main idea, compare and contrast—but one of the things they haven't had as much training on is how to use the nuances of text structure to support understanding."

Such demands seem to have been taken seriously by publishers: Of the "big three" bidding on the lucrative Florida contract, all include text-complexity gauges in the series they submitted for review.

A similar desire to help teachers truly embody the standards in their instruction—rather than engage in "the great binder-replacement phenomenon"—caused Tennessee officials to break their English/language arts adoption cycle into two distinct phases, according to Emily Barton, the state's assistant commissioner of curriculum and instruction.

> **IF WE MAKE A MISTAKE AND ALLOW** textbooks to go forward with our endorsement, it will indicate they are rigorous in a way many ... probably are not."
>
> JOHN WHITE
> State schools chief, Louisiana

First, every basal series had to meet seven non-negotiable requirements, all related to the common core, including whether 80 percent of questions are "text dependent" and that at least 50 percent of selections are nonfiction. Only after meeting those requirements were the materials advanced to a second review, which digs into other criteria.

The state's two-tiered model has already forced some changes. For example, one publisher submitted a series that reviewers determined didn't provide students with enough writing activities requiring them to delve into source texts, Ms. Barton said. Faced with being disqualified from the rest of the review process, the publisher created an addendum.

"We saw publishers respond, when given information about places where their products were not meeting expectations," she said.

Publishers' Response

The major education publishing houses have, in general, distinguished between their bridge products, such as older series or editions they've supplemented, and brand-new editions that they crafted from scratch to embody the standards.

Districts using Treasures, for example, were offered free supplements, including teacher guides and new reading selections where needed, according to Daniela Perelli, the vice president of editorial for elementary reading at McGraw-Hill School Education, based in New York City. They were also provided with an analysis showing units in their old manuals they could use to provide aligned instruction.

"We did have that variety of text types already incorporated, and we spent a lot of time teaching about the genres in the piece, the organization of the piece, the particular aspects of writers' craft that we're asking kids to look at," she said. "We felt the base was there, and good instruction was already in Treasures, and that we were now identifying it with the right labels."

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt offers for purchase common-core "enhancement" packages for districts using its backlisted series, such as StoryTown and Reading.

"A lot of the emphasis in the product is on writing and performance tasks," said Melissa J. Counihan, the vice president of product management and strategy for K-12 literacy and social studies for the Boston-based company. "Argumentative writing didn't really exist in the early-elementary grades; that's one of the things we really had to change for the enhancements."

Such efforts to retrofit older curricula, as it were, appear partly influenced by the overall decrease in revenue caused by cash-strapped districts' delays in purchasing new materials. McGraw-Hill officials, for instance, reported a 20 percent decline in its school division earnings in a second-quarter July conference call with investors. They attributed a "low-water mark" in K-12 publishing partly to the common core, and anticipated improvements in 2013.

Even in the publishers' new "from-the-ground-up" curricula—typically identified by the words "common core" appearing on the cover—as well as in the older curricula, there is a degree of repetition in the series. About half the reading selections are repeated between Reading Street's 2008 and 2013 5th grade anthology, as are about two-thirds of readings in Treasures between 2009 and 2011. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt officials said about half the selections in Journeys' 5th grade anthology are identical between the 2011 and 2014 editions, too.

But as evidenced earlier, there are differences, if sometimes subtle ones, in how exercises for students are framed. In a selection about a 19th century woman, the 2011 edition of Treasures, for instance, asks students to detail how an author's "choice of words" relates to the purpose of her biographical narrative, a question not in the former version's exercises for the same selection.

The 2013 version of Reading Street has some arguably more difficult "writing across texts" prompts. A narrative about ghost towns is now accompanied by a short piece of historical fiction. Rather than making a poster, as in the previous edition, students must now write a journal entry in a character's voice, drawing on details from the nonfiction text.

Some of the most important changes, the publishers said, appear in the new teachers' editions to help them implement the new techniques. For example, the brand new Reading Street teacher editions guide teachers through the reading of each featured text three times, said Nancy L. Winship, the vice president of product development for Pearson PreK-12 literacy. The tool responds to the common core's demands that complex texts should be read multiple times as students master its new vocabulary, meaning, and craft.

McGraw-Hill and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt officials say their newest basals, which weren't available for review, offer similar features.

New Tests

The ultimate test of alignment, though, lies in the hands of state reviewers.

Complicating those decisions is the fact that state adoption tends to be an all-or-nothing decision, leaving less room for shades of gray. Materials in Florida, for instance, are being evaluated on each criterion on a 1-to-4 scale, but they don't have to clear a particular point threshold in order to win adoption, state officials said.

In New Mexico's adoption earlier this year, reviewers detailed perceived weaknesses in several of the K-3 basal volumes. Documents on the state's website show that reviewers judged that Journeys 2011, even with supplements, "does not sufficiently provide opportunities for in-depth writing instruction" vis-á-vis the common core. And while the 2013 Reading Street's reading comprehension instruction was praised, its research and inquiry prompts were deemed "limited in scope." But both series were ultimately approved by the state.

Tennessee, for the first time, will issue letter grades to English/language arts materials, a move officials hope will give a better sense of reviewers' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses in each basal series' alignment to the standards.

Louisiana's 2012-13 adoption process could serve as a test case of how far states are willing to press on the issue of alignment.

Publishers' bids, including one by each of the three major houses, were reviewed by committees against three newly developed evaluation tools drawn from the common core. But based on those reviews—which have not yet been made public—and his own perusal, state Superintendent John White said he is skeptical of the textbooks, and is considering whether to recommend any to the state board of education for adoption, in December.

"I'm very concerned that the questions, the assessments, the text complexity, and other dimensions of the textbooks are not remotely ready to be called 'aligned' with the common core," Mr. White said. "My strong belief is that if we make a mistake and allow textbooks to go forward with our endorsement, it will indicate they are rigorous in a way many, if not all of them, probably are not."

Beyond Adoption

The rush to update the basal readers has some observers asking deeper questions about the architecture of reading curricula. Mr. Dewitz of Mary Baldwin College, for instance, contends that past the earliest grades, basal textbooks may no longer be an ideal way to teach to the depth envisioned in the standards.

"If you read deeply into the common core, it's the ability to trace and track the development of an idea or a character over time," he said. "Essentially from 3rd grade up, they are talking about books."

Ms. Barton says more Tennessee districts have expressed interest in using complete texts in elementary English/language arts classes, rather than shorter, prepackaged curriculum units.

"I do hear districts say, 'We're going to use these three short texts and these two long ones,' and that they want to get the copyright licenses and go from there," she said. "We don't yet have the 'iTunes' version of curriculum, ... but common standards do change the economies of scale."

In one development, educators across the country are increasingly making use of free or open-source materials to craft lessons. And while the quality of those materials is widely variable, New York officials view their project as a way of signaling what a baseline standard of alignment quality should look like in the state. Unlike the proprietary basal series, the curriculum will be open-source—free for teachers, districts, and even states to use as they see fit, Ms. Gerson said.

Though it's difficult to say how the market will evolve as implementation continues, some see opportunities amid the chaos.

"I have a sense from teachers that they are going to want greater control over decisions that heretofore have been oftentimes left to publishers or central offices," Mr. White said. "That's going to take hundreds of thousands of different forms; but I do think it implies a shift away from teachers who are willing to say, 'OK, I will take this book of content, its order, its skills, its sequence, and its assessments on face value as simply what I need to teach.' " ■

Coverage of the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the common assessments is supported in part by a grant from the GE Foundation, at www.ge.com/foundation.

Andrew Archuleta, a 4th grader at Emerson Elementary School in Albuquerque, N.M., raises his hand to ask a question about a writing assignment. Teachers at his school are piloting ways to help English-learners master new reading and writing standards.

Building Bridges for ELLs

By Lesli A. Maxwell

A New Mexico school focuses on making standards accessible to everyone—including English-learners

Albuquerque, N.M.

In Yolanda Medrano's class here at Emerson Elementary School, hands shoot into the air to answer questions she is asking about women and professional baseball.

These 4th grade students—most of them still learning English—have just finished reading and listening to a story about Jackie Mitchell, a 17-year-old girl who struck out baseball legends Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig when she pitched in an exhibition game against the New York Yankees in 1931.

Noting one expression in the story, Ms. Medrano asks the students to tell her what "throws like a girl" means.

"It means you don't throw good," a boy answers. "It means that no one thought she should play with boys," says another one. "It means that girls aren't good at baseball, but that isn't true," offers a girl.

Ms. Medrano checks with a few other 4th graders to make sure they understand the insult, which is common in English but doesn't exist in Spanish, the first language for most of them.

This reading lesson is part of Emerson Elementary's, and the entire Albuquerque school system's, foray this year into the Common Core State Standards in English/language arts and mathematics in the primary grades. The district piloted the new standards in 4th and 8th grades last school year, and this year, it is rolling them out in every kindergarten through 3rd grade classroom.

The new English/language arts standards demand that students sharpen their skills at reading, understanding, and analyzing a variety of complex texts. For teachers of English-language learners like Ms. Medrano, using strategies and supports (such as clarifying unfamiliar words and expressions) have long been crucial tools in effectively teaching ELLs, but they are even more critical for all teachers who work with English-learners now that the new standards expect that ELLs will be able to read and comprehend complex texts across all content areas despite their unfamiliarity with English.

At Emerson—a long-struggling school of about 500 students in one of the poorest sections of Albuquerque—the focus on effectively teaching the common-core standards to English-language learners is the centerpiece of a new strategy to drive up academic achievement. Nearly 50 percent of students at Emerson are English-learners.

After years of sluggish test scores and the discovery of a troubling pattern that showed very few ELLs were progressing, even modestly, in their English-proficiency over the course of a school year, leaders in the district and the local teachers' union agreed last spring to overhaul the school.

District leaders and Ellen Bernstein, the president of the Albuquerque Teachers Federation, worked together to select a new principal and vice-principal, and agreed that teachers would be invited to reapply for their jobs or transfer to different schools. About three-quarters of the teachers who were hired came from other city schools; only a handful reapplied and were selected to stay. Most significantly, the district agreed to pay for an extra hour of work time each day that would be spent

Photos by Kitty Clark for Education Week

Yolanda Medrano discusses a nonfiction text with students at Emerson Elementary. The 4th grade teacher says English-learners may need extra help, such as clarifying unfamiliar words and phrases, to master more complex texts.

exclusively on professional development. Teachers would also have to start school a week earlier for training than their colleagues across the district, and all would have to hold an endorsement to teach English-learners, either in bilingual education or Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

With those pieces in place, the district and the union decided to make Emerson a common-core "demonstration" school where, eventually, teachers from across the city could come to watch and learn best practices from their colleagues on teaching the common core and supporting ELLs.

Gift of Time

"We are doing common core just as every other elementary school in the district, but the benefit we have is the extra time to come together, on a daily basis, to have deep conversations about our teaching and learning and supporting our students," said Denise Brigman, a veteran school administrator in Albuquerque who was selected to be Emerson's new principal.

Across the 90,000-student Albuquerque school system, 18 percent of students are English-language learners, said Lynne Rosen, the district's director of language and cultural equity. Most of them come from Spanish-speaking families and are either the children of immigrants from Mexico, or second- or third-generation Mexican-American. The district has also seen a recent uptick of students whose parents immigrated from Vietnam, Burma, and other Asian countries.

But many more students, Ms. Rosen says, are better described as "academic-language learners," students who are still mastering more formal English vocabulary, grammar, and syntax that are not commonly part of ordinary oral communications.

"No one is born knowing academic language, so this is a skill that all teachers, regardless of who their students are, must work intentionally to develop," she said.

To help teachers and administrators understand better themselves what academic language is and why it's so important for student success, the district has been working closely with Lily Wong Fillmore, a professor emeritus of education at the University of California, Berkeley, who has long argued that English-learners often don't learn academic language because they are not exposed to it, either in the curricular materials they have been taught from or in the language spoken by teachers in the classroom.

There is broad consensus that widely used texts in public schools have been simplified and watered down over the years, a phenomenon that has been even more profound for ELLs, Ms. Wong Fillmore said.

Ramping Up Rigor

Last February, the district brought Ms. Wong Fillmore and Gabriela Uro, the director of English-learner policy and research at the Washington-based Council of the Great City Schools, to Albuquerque to talk to staff members about the opportunity that the common core presents for bringing a more-challenging curriculum to all students, especially for ELLs. Ms. Wong Fillmore also made a presentation to the Albuquerque school board, Ms. Rosen said.

"The key lesson from her to our staff was that ELLs have to have access to grade-level, complex text," she said. "That is revolutionary."

Staff members at Emerson have embraced the idea that no one is a native speaker of academic language as a central mantra and have spent hours talking about the use of complex texts and how they must change or augment their classroom practices to support students, said Ms. Brigman, the principal. Together, teachers pore over the units of study developed for the new standards by a group of nearly 100 teachers from across the district and "figure out how they need to take those lessons and adapt them specifically for the kids in their class," said Penny Zink, an instructional coach hired as part of the team to turn Emerson around.

"This gives teachers a lot of responsibility, but it also gives them an opportunity for ownership," Ms. Brigman said.

Elvira Desachy-Godoy, who teaches a 3rd grade dual Spanish/English class at Emerson, says she finds the daily collaboration with her colleagues "energizing."

"I am listening to what they say they are doing in their classrooms and the next day, I am probably going to try the same thing," she said. For example, she has started to use more games to engage her students and has starting mixing up the configurations of her small groups so that lower-proficiency students have more opportunity to interact and learn from their higher-proficiency peers.

In a separate, but related, effort, a small cadre of teachers—brought together by the Albuquerque Teachers Federation, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers—began meeting a year ago to study the common-core English/language arts standards and craft model lessons based on grade-level-complex texts. Through the local union, the teachers are providing professional development to any colleagues looking for help with selecting texts, planning lessons, and providing supports to English-learners. The teachers' model lessons will also be videotaped and posted on the bilingual Colorín Colorado website as a free resource.

The initiative—which paired the teachers with Diane August, a language-acquisition researcher and former teacher of English-learners—is supported by the AFT's Innovation Fund.

Some teachers involved in the project say they were stunned to discover that much of the text they had been using in the district's English/language arts curriculum, for example, was not just below grade level, but far below.

"I was stupefied," said Maria Padilla-Enyart, a middle school English/language arts teacher who is part of the cadre. "I had been teaching 4th-grade-level text to 7th graders who were in general education. And what about my ELLs? They were getting an even more watered-down version."

Norma Lujan-Quiñones and Loyola Garcia, 1st grade teachers who are also part of the common core/ELL group, said the same was true in the lower grades, with reading content too often presented in pictures rather than words.

"It's an injustice to these students," Ms. Garcia said. "Those days of watering down material for them have to be gone if they are going to succeed with the common core."

Adapting 'Little Red Hen'

Ms. Lujan-Quiñones recently presented a lesson she developed on "The Little Red Hen" folktale to about two dozen teacher colleagues from around Albuquerque. A more condensed version of the story is in the district's 1st grade basal reader, but she built her lesson around a longer, more language-rich version, which forced her to think more carefully about the supports she needs to give the 10 English-learners in her class of 18 students. She says she may spend as much as two weeks on the story. In the past, it might have been just two days.

On the first page of the story, the writer uses "sleep," "nap," and "snooze," words with similar meanings, but only one of which—"sleep"—might be familiar to her ELLs. In her lesson, Ms. Lujan-Quiñones will point out "sleep" and ask her students to tell her if they read or heard another word with the same meaning. She'll ask them to act out "sleep," "nap," and "snore," as she says the words aloud.

"For me, as their teacher, I have to spend much more time reading and thinking about the text myself before asking them to tackle it," she said. "And it's not enough just to read it to them or read it with them, we've got to break it down and have discussions."

Preparations for All

Back at Emerson, the team emphasizes how nascent their efforts are—not only in figuring how best to teach the new standards to ELLs, but also in establishing a strong school culture, with involved parents and strong community partners. They are less than three months into what they hope will be a transformation of the school and a model for the city.

But Clint "Tee" McDougal, a 4th grade dual-language teacher before he was tapped last spring to be the school's new assistant principal, sees signs of promise.

"I did a classroom observation in 5th grade and watched these small groups of English-learners reading and discussing a science text on the Albuquerque aquifer," Mr. McDougal said. "First, just seeing these kids work with a complex *science* text is a huge shift, and seeing them persevere with it shows me that our teachers are creating the conditions students need to stick with something until they understand."

But educators here are also concerned about how they can make sure that all teachers across the district will be prepared to change their practices and provide the intense supports that English-learners need. One of the next major common-core-related initiatives in Albuquerque involves intensive professional development for principals on the needs of English-learners. In addition, the district is getting ready to release an adaptation of its common-core English/language arts units of study for dual-language teachers who also teach Spanish/language arts.

"We do worry about the children who could be left behind by this," said Ms. Rosen. "But then you have to turn that worry into figuring out how we make sure that doesn't happen." ■

Coverage of "deeper learning" that will prepare students with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in a rapidly changing world is supported in part by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, at www.hewlett.org.

APPLY TODAY FOR A BEYOND WORDS GRANT:

WWW.ALA.ORG/AASL/DISASTERRELIEF

WHEN YOUR SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAM IS GONE, THE LOSS TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY IS BEYOND WORDS

SCHOOL LIBRARIES ARE MUCH MORE THAN LITERACY CENTERS.

They serve as a safe environment to explore and learn, access new information technologies, and collaborate with peers. When a school library program is destroyed by a natural disaster, the students and the community feel the immediate loss of a valuable resource that reaches far beyond books.

Since 2006, the American Association of School Librarians, with funding from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, has given more than **one million in grants to over 125 school libraries** across the country affected by natural disasters.

Beyond Words℠

the Dollar General school library relief fund

A collaboration among

DOLLAR GENERAL | ALA American Library Association | AASL American Association of School Librarians | nea National Education Association

An ALA, AASL, NEA program funded by Dollar General Literacy Foundation

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

50 E Huron, Chicago, IL 60611 | 1-800-545-2433, ext 4382 | www.ala.org/aasl

PHOTOGRAPHIES ARE COURTESY OF BEYOND WORDS GRANT RECIPIENTS

Get more from the Common Core

Marzano's COMMON CORE IMPLEMENTATION STEPS TO SUCCESS

1 Module 1
What are the CCSS?

2 Module 2
How do proficiency scales support CCSS implementation?

3 Module 3
What instructional practices support CCSS implementation?

4 Module 4
What assessment practices support CCSS implementation?

Learn more!
marzanoresearch.com/services/ccss.aspx
888.849.0851

Maximize your PD with strategies grounded in research from Marzano Research Laboratory.

By Robert J. Marzano and Julia A. Simms

The discussion of standards is not new. For three decades, educators have struggled with the various challenges of standards-based education: some sets of standards attempted to cover too much content; others included too many knowledge dimensions in one standard. Curriculum lagged behind standards; assessments were misaligned. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) undertook to resolve many of these difficulties, but for them be effective, educators across the nation must understand the research and theory behind them and strategies for their successful implementation.

In *Using Common Core Standards to Enhance Classroom Instruction & Assessment*, we begin by discussing the organization of the CCSS and the role that learning progressions played in determining their structure and content. Both research and theory suggest that organizing content in relatively specific sequences (called learning progressions) facilitates student understanding; such sequences are embedded throughout the CCSS.

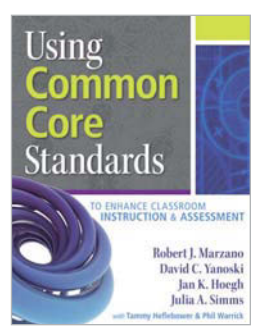
Next, we provide concrete strategies to help teachers implement the CCSS in their classrooms. We describe how teachers can identify, assess, and grade their students' levels of performance for each of the CCSS. In addition to presenting a process that educators at all levels can use to identify learning targets (with simpler and more complex levels of performance for each target), we explain how MRL's scales for the CCSS were developed, and how school and district administrators can use our system of measurement topics and elements to give teachers specific guidance about how to implement the CCSS.

We also address the practice standards of the CCSS: those skills that students must use to interact with knowledge and information and collaborate with others in their academic and vocational pursuits, such as:

- Solving problems
- Constructing arguments
- Evaluating others' reasoning
- Depicting and modeling their learning
- Using digital tools effectively and efficiently
- Striving for precision and accuracy

Our analysis of the college- and career-readiness standards and the Standards for Mathematical Practice identified 17 specific strategies that teachers can use to infuse these cognitive and interpersonal skills from the CCSS into classroom instruction. We describe each strategy, exemplify how a teacher would use the strategy in mathematics and ELA, and provide lists of words and phrases that teachers can use to prompt and reinforce students' use of these college- and career-readiness skills.

Finally, we provide a complete set of ready-to-use ELA and mathematics scales for the CCSS, designed by teachers and researchers at Marzano Research Laboratory.



Using Common Core Standards to Enhance Classroom Instruction & Assessment
By Robert J. Marzano
David C. Yanoski
Jan K. Hoegh
Julia A. Simms
With Tammy Heflebower and Phil Warrick

BKL015
ISBN: 978-0-9833512-9-0