MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT USING THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: WHAT SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEADERS NEED TO KNOW

A PCG Education White Paper

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Forty-five states, several US territories, and the District of Columbia have adopted the new Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (CCSS-ELA). The standards are widely touted as providing a clear, rigorous pathway that will prepare students to be college and career ready. States, districts, and schools are poised to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment. CCSS-ELA are complex, with implications for instruction and assessment in not only English language arts, but also history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.

Many school and district leaders are comparing their state standards to CCSS-ELA to identify commonalities and gaps—as well as to understand how CCSS-ELA impacts curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This PCG Education White Paper provides a quick overview of CCSS-ELA, describes eight differences between these standards and earlier standards documents, and outlines actions that school and district leaders will need to take to ensure that the potential of the new standards is unlocked for K–12 students.

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INTRODUCTION

In June 2010, the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI)[1] released the final version of the *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (CCSS-ELA)*[2]. The intent of CCSS-ELA is to provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn in the English language arts, so that teachers and parents know what they need to do to help students gain the knowledge and skills they will need for success in college and careers[3].

CCSS-ELA have been conceived as the "next generation of K–12 standards." CCSS-ELA draw from the best of individual state standards, advance new directions that emerging research shows to be important to student success, and address perceived inconsistencies in standards across the country. The new standards are designed to rally all educators across the United States in supporting students to become proficient on mutually agreed language and literacy knowledge skills in conjunction with content area learning[4]. More than 85% of all students across the United States will now be held accountable for achieving English language arts proficiency based on a common set of curriculum standards[5].

In this *PCG Education White Paper*, we briefly describe eight major shifts in emphasis of CCSS-ELA with examples from the new standards. For each shift, we also suggest implications for school and district leaders who are preparing to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with CCSS-ELA[6]. These eight shifts raise the bar for more rigorous English Language Arts curricula and instructional practices across the United States.

Eight major shifts in emphasis of the K-12 CCSS-ELA
1. Vertical alignment of College and Career Readiness anchor standards (CCR) and K–12 Common Core State Standards (CCSS-ELA)
2. Increased attention to informational text in the English Language Arts curriculum
3. Independent reading of high quality, increasingly complex text
4. Extension of foundational literacy skills to grades 4 and 5, but insistence on a simultaneous focus on skills and meaning-making K–5
5. Emphasis on systematic language development with a strong explicit focus on academic vocabulary
6. Use of speaking and listening skills to communicate and collaborate
7. Purposeful writing that uses text evidence to support reasoning
8. Emphasis on disciplinary literacy through the integration of language and literacy with content knowledge

Taken together, these shifts in emphasis have the potential to alter dramatically the ways in which teachers teach and students learn across the United States. CCSS-ELA will make a difference in student achievement if states and districts use the standards with intent and integrity as a roadmap to realign local assessment, curriculum materials, and instructional approaches from the earliest years of schooling through graduation from high school.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMON CORE STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

The Common Core State Standards are organized by grade level for K–8, and by grade bands for 9–10 and 11–12. This organizational structure provides clear guidance for grade level performance, as well as flexibility for high school courses. In addition, CCSS-ELA include parallel anchor standards for literacy in science, history/social studies, and technical subjects.

It is important to note that the standards, while designed to be measurable, are highly synergistic. That is, the connections between reading and writing, between speaking and reading, between research and disciplinary literacy are all emphasized in the standards. It is significant that CCSS-ELA include explicit attention to many aspects of reading, writing, speaking, listening, presenting, and research that have not consistently or traditionally been included in state standards previously.

CCSS-ELA identifies 10 College and Career Ready (CCR) Standards for Reading, 10 for Writing, six for Speaking and Listening, and six for Language. These clusters are divided further into categories. For example, the Reading Standards are divided into four categories:

Reading Standards Categories: CCSS-ELA College and Career Ready (CCR) Standards
• Key ideas and details: emphasizes close reading to determine meaning, drawing inferences, analyzing themes, and summarizing supporting details
• Craft and structure: emphasizes word choice, grammatical structures, and point of view
• Integration of knowledge and ideas: emphasizes analysis of textual themes and arguments across varied media and formats
• Range of reading and level of text complexity: emphasizes the importance of independent and proficient reading of complex text (CCSS-ELA, p. 10)

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[1]CCSSI is a state initiative led by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to achieve widespread agreement and adoption of a set of "fewer, clearer, higher" core content standards in English language arts and mathematics across the United States.

[2]CCSSI also released Common Core State Standards for Mathematics.

[3]See http://www.corestandards.org.

[4]Two consortia of states have been awarded Race to the Top funds to develop Common Core-aligned assessments: the Smarter Balanced consortium and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers.

[5]See http://www.all4ed.org/common-standards/

[6]Some states have taken the opportunity of CCSS to reframe the standards for early childhood education as well.

In parallel, there are *foundational standards for reading for grades K–5*, which emphasize specific reading skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics/decoding and word analysis, and fluency.

There are 10 College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards for Writing divided into four categories:

Writing Standards Categories: CCSS-ELA College and Career Ready (CCR) Standards

- Text types and purposes: emphasizes writing arguments to support points of view, informative texts to convey ideas, and narratives to share real or imagined experiences
- Production and distribution of writing: emphasizes the writing process and use of technology to produce and publish writing
- Research to build and present knowledge: emphasizes research to answer questions, information gathering from credible sources, and evidence to support analysis
- Range of writing: for varied purposes and audiences

CCSS-ELA also provide an appendix of student writing samples at grade level with annotations regarding particular features of student work.

Speaking & Listening Standards Categories: CCSS-ELA College and Career Ready (CCR) Standard

- Comprehension and collaboration in which students are expected to participate in conversation with diverse partners and
  - integrate information from multimedia and formats
  - evaluate a speaker's point of view
- Presentation of knowledge and ideas including
  - organization of ideas
  - strategic use of digital media and visual displays
  - adaptation of speech to varied contexts and communication tasks

The CCR anchor standards for Speaking and Listening consist of six standards divided into two categories:

CCSS identifies six College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language divided into three categories:

Language Standards Categories: CCSS-ELA College and Career Ready (CCR) Standards

- Conventions of Standard English for grammar and usage when writing and speaking and writing mechanics including capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
- Knowledge of language use in different contexts
- Vocabulary acquisition including use of context, analysis of word parts, and reference materials to determine unknown word meaning, figurative language, and general academic and domain-specific words across the English language arts

Three substantial appendices are also included in CCSS-ELA:

Appendices Included in the Standards

- Appendix A further explains elements of the standards
- Appendix B provides exemplars of complex text at each grade level
- Appendix C provides exemplars of student writing

The authors of CCSS-ELA expect that literacy-rich units of study will be developed that incorporate the text exemplars or texts of equivalent complexity for a given grade level.

EIGHT MAJOR SHIFTS IN EMPHASIS WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR DISTRICT AND SCHOOL LEADERS

In this section, we briefly describe each of CCSS-ELA's eight shifts in emphasis along with implications for action by school and district leaders.

Shift #1: Vertical alignment of College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (CCR) and K–12 Common Core State Standards (CCSS-ELA)

A core organizing principle of the Common Core State Standards is backward mapping in which the outcomes goal is identified at the outset. Working backwards, CCSS-ELA identifies a "staircase" of related skills and knowledge throughout K–12 to achieve that goal.[7] For example, the first College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standard for reading describes the level of proficiency required in one area of reading comprehension: substantiating point of view with supporting ideas drawn from the text.

The following examples illustrate how related skills are developed throughout the K–12 curriculum to build this proficiency. Meeting the level of proficiency described for grades 11 and 12 signals readiness for reading college and career level texts with comprehension.

CCR Standard for Reading: Key Ideas and Details, CCSS-ELA #1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. (CCSS-ELA, p. 10)

Grade 3: Key Ideas & Details, CCSS-ELA #1	Grade 6: Keys Ideas & Details, CCSS-ELA #1	Grades 11-12: Key Ideas & Details, CCSS-ELA #1
Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis of the answers. (CCSS-ELA, p. 12)	Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. (CCSS-ELA, p. 36)	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. (CCSS-ELA, p. 38)

[7]For information on the process of backward curriculum and design of curriculum maps, see Wiggins & McTighe, 2005 and Jacobs & Johnson, 2009.

Implications of Shift #1 for school and district leaders

Backward mapping requires that school and district leaders review their programs carefully to ensure that they build appropriately to the stated college and career outcomes described in CCSS-ELA. Current core reading programs as well as reading, writing, and research assignments K–12 will need to be reviewed for alignment. Typically, the CCSS-ELA are more rigorous than what has been implemented in many districts, especially in the middle grades. Districts and schools will need to review science, history/social studies, and technical subjects curricula to make sure that they include explicit attention to the reading, writing, presenting and research demands of these content areas. Schools and districts will need to provide time for teachers to incorporate CCSS-ELA expectations for a given grade level in curriculum-embedded assessments. School and district leaders will need to work with teachers to ensure that instruction has adequately prepared students to meet these expectations through opportunities for modeling, explicit teaching, and guided and independent practice prior to an assessment being administered. Otherwise the curriculum "on paper" is unlikely to match the curriculum "in action." Because backward mapping starts with the end in mind, CCSS-ELA expectations may be higher than has been the case for all but the strongest students. Many teachers will likely need professional development to enhance their ability to scaffold students up to higher levels of performance.

What are the implications of vertical alignment for your school and district in terms of materials, curriculum, instruction, assessment, structures, policies, and teacher professional development?

Shift #2: Increased attention to informational text in the English language arts curriculum

Consistent with the 2011 NAEP Framework for Reading (National Assessment Governing Board, 2010a), the Common Core State Standards shift the focus of assessment, curriculum, and instruction from overemphasis on the reading of literature in elementary school to a balance of literature and informational text, K–12. The 2011 NAEP framework calls for 40% of the assessment at grade 4 to be based on informational text. By grade 12, however, informational text comprises 70% of NAEP's assessment passages. CCSS-ELA establish a parallel structure, affirming the importance of reading informational text from kindergarten through 12th grade. This ongoing focus is intended to ensure that students have sufficient engagement with informational text to prepare them for college and career reading.

An important feature of CCSS-ELA is the representation of reading comprehension skills in a similar manner across informational text and literature. For example, a CCR anchor standard under the category of *craft and structure calls for attentiveness to the structure of text as a mechanism for scaffolding comprehension*. This standard is as relevant to the comprehension of literature as it is to the comprehension of informational text in the content areas.

CCR Standard for Reading: Craft and Structure, CCSS-ELA #5
Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole (CCSS-ELA, p.10)

Kindergarten: Craft & Structure, CCSS-ELA #5	Grade 7: Craft & Structure, CCSS-ELA #5	Grades 9: Craft & Structure, CCSS-ELA #5
Literature: Recognize common types of texts (e.g., storybooks, poems) (CCSS-ELA , p. 11) Informational Text: Identify the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book. (CCSS-ELA, p.13)	Literature: Analyze how a drama's or poem's form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning. (CCSS-ELA, p. 36) Informational Text: Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the major sections contribute to the whole and to the development of ideas. (CCSS-ELA, p.39)	Literature: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots) and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise. (CCSS-ELA, p. 38) Informational Text: Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter). (CCSS-ELA, p. 40)

Implications of Shift #2 for district and school leaders

Many districts and schools have not consistently required a strong emphasis on informational text in grades K–3 or as part of ELA classes in grades 4–12. This shift in emphasis will require examination of the current materials used in grades K–5. Districts and schools will need to ensure that all current K–12 teachers across content areas possess a variety of instructional strategies they can use to engage students in developing strong comprehension strategies for reading informational text. Since CCSS-ELA emphasize comparison across types of text, it is important that the ELA program in grades 6–12 include frequent opportunities to draw conclusions and compare information using literary and informational texts in conjunction with one another. This has implications for the types of assignments students have the opportunity to complete at all grade levels, and will have a direct impact on their success on assessments aligned with CCSS-ELA. CCSS-ELA can be used as the basis for agreements about how much and what types of informational text will be read by students in each content area each year. Teachers of students in the early grades and across content areas in grades 4–12 may need additional professional development to enact an increased focus on informational text throughout the curriculum since mere assignment of text does not result in increased ability to read text.

What are the implications of vertical alignment for your school and district in terms of materials, curriculum, instruction, assessment, structures, policies, and teacher professional development?

Shift #3: Independent reading of high quality, increasingly complex text

One of the most significant shifts in the Common Core State Standards is an unequivocal commitment to engaging all students in independent reading of grade-appropriate, increasingly complex text in all grades levels K–12. A recent ACT report (2006) showed that the students likely to be successful in introductory college courses were those who could answer comprehension questions associated with the reading of complex, college level texts.[8] Examination of the gap between the complexity of high school texts read by many students and the sophistication of college-level material have led to conclusions that many students graduate from high school ill-equipped for the rigor of college courses. Many students require remedial coursework in the first two years of college; others simply give up and drop out. This provides further evidence of the need to re-focus K–12 education on independent reading of complex text.[9] The CCR anchor standard for text complexity focuses on the independent reading of increasingly complex, high quality literature and informational text in every grade level, thereby supporting the development of competent, confident readers.

CCR Standard for Reading: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity, CCSS-ELA #10

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently. (CCSS-ELA, p. 10)

Grade 2: Range of Reading & Level of Text Complexity, CCSS-ELA #10	Grade 7: Range of Reading & Level of Text Complexity, CCSS-ELA #10
Literature: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature including stories and poetry, in the grades 2–3 complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. (CCSS-ELA, p. 11) Sample texts in grades 2–3 band: Charlotte's Web (E. B. White); Sarah, Plain and Tall (P. MacLachian)	Literature: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, drama, and poems in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. (CCSS-ELA, p. 37) Sample texts in grades 6–8 band: Little Women (Louisa May Alcott); Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry (Mildred Taylor)

While the debate continues as to whether the texts that students read today are more or less difficult than texts students read in the past,[10] it is clear that many students do not regularly read high quality, connected text for concerted periods of time. The engagement in reading appropriate complex text throughout schooling to prepare students for the texts they will read in college and careers.

Many, including the authors of CCSS-ELA, acknowledge limitations to the available tools for measuring text complexity

(e.g., the large reliance on lexile levels), which may result in inappropriate recommendations of text for some readers. CCSS-ELA recommends using a blend of quantitative and qualitative procedures along with reader and text variables to code the difficulty of various text genres. CCSS-ELA Appendix B includes sample text exemplars and performance tasks at varying levels of cognitive skill. These exemplars provide guidance for engaging students in reading increasingly complex grade level literature and informational text.

Implications of Shift #3 for district and school leaders

The issue of text complexity is a profound one for educators. In grades K–5 there are often fierce advocates of a "developmental approach" to reading and matching students to text and teachers who are reluctant to have students "read beyond their level." In the middle and upper grades, ELA teachers may direct students to only read texts "at their level," read aloud all complex text, or assign reading that is challenging without providing instruction in how to read this type of text. At the higher grades, some content teachers allow students to avoid reading in many classes, relying primarily on a "hands-on approach."

None of these approaches support the outcomes described in CCSS-ELA. CCSS-ELA do not say that all students must only read complex text, but they require a consistent, focused, instructional approach that

- engages all students with grade-appropriate complex text in all content areas; and

- scaffolds students "up" to complex text on an ongoing basis so they become proficient independent readers of texts that were previously in their "instructional level," documenting progress through use of frequent formative assessment to ensure that all students are making adequate progress as readers.

For example, in the lower grades, do teachers read complex texts aloud before asking students to practice reading them independently? Do teachers in the middle grades use easier texts or video before having students read more complex text in all content areas? Do teachers have students work together using collaborative routines[11] such as reciprocal teaching[12] or collaborative strategic reading[13] when working with complex text?

School and district leaders must establish these types of approaches as expected practice. This requires clearly stated expectations reinforced by walkthroughs and classroom observations, alignment with teacher evaluation and availability of appropriate texts and media resources. Teachers of English language arts, history/social studies, science; and technical subjects (e.g., health, construction, fine arts, business) will need time to examine and review the level of texts currently used within their units of study and to develop or adopt units of study that use the CCSS-ELA exemplar texts or texts comparable in challenge.

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[8]ACT, Inc., 2006.
[9]Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy, 2010.
[10]See, for example, Hiebert & Pearson, 2010.
[11]See Meltzer & Jackson, 2011.
[12]See Palincsar & Brown, 1984.
[13]See Klingner et al., 2001.

What are the implications of Shift #3 for materials, strategy instruction, scaffolding, guided release of responsibility, and integrated use of text in ELA, science, technical subjects, and social studies in your school and district?

Shift #4: Extension of foundational literacy skills to grades 4 and 5, but insistence on a simultaneous focus on skills and meaning-making in K–5

Consistent with the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (2000), CCSS-ELA articulate a coherent sequence of beginning reading skills in print concepts, phonemic awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency that contribute to success in beginning reading. In addition, CCSS-ELA address more recent research indicating that important foundational skills that continue to develop during the latter years of elementary school.[14] For example, advanced decoding, word analysis of multisyllabic words in support of vocabulary development, and fluency benchmarks for the upper elementary years are included in CCSS-ELA. The language of the fluency standard is repetitive throughout the early grades to affirm that fluency is not an end, but a means or a "bridge" to comprehension of appropriate, grade level text. In addition, the fluency standard calls attention to the importance of self-monitoring of accurate decoding, encouraging rereading to correct decoding errors. Another important design feature of CCSS-ELA is the simultaneous, as opposed to sequential, focus on foundational skills as well as the anchor standards K–12. This ensures that the focus on meaning-making and critical thinking begins in kindergarten and continues through the elementary grades. CCSS-ELA does not recommend that students focus on "getting basic skills down first" before focusing on comprehension, but emphasizes that reading only occurs when the reader makes sense of the text—underscoring that "breaking the code" is essential, but not sufficient.

Implications of Shift #4 for school and district leaders

District and school leaders will need to give teachers time to examine their current reading programs to understand where attention is needed to strengthen this dual focus on skills and meaning-making in K–5. In many districts, the focus of the reading program in K-3 has devolved primarily to skills development with a laser focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. In some cases, students who miss the benchmark by slight amounts are assigned copious amounts of skill and drill. Without the simultaneous focus on meaning-making, this results in impoverished reading instruction. In other cases, a commitment to a program based on leveled texts without a strong focus on skills leaves students without the capacity they need to read ably and fluently. Many fourth and fifth grade reading programs stop providing any instruction related to decoding multisyllabic words or fluency in order to support improved comprehension. There are obvious implications in the shift for curriculum agreements, instructional materials, teacher professional development, classroom observation, and assessment. When the enacted curriculum is aligned with CCSS-ELA and supported consistently throughout grades K–5, many more students should enter the middle grades as proficient readers.

What are the implications of Shift #3 for materials, strategy instruction, scaffolding, guided release of responsibility, and integrated use of text in ELA, science, technical subjects, and social studies in your school and district?

Shift #5: Emphasis on systematic language development with a strong explicit focus on academic vocabulary

CCSS-ELA outline specific grade level expectations for increasing knowledge of language—including mechanics and conventions—something that many state standards documents did not explicitly address. Perhaps even more importantly, throughout CCSS-ELA language standards, there is the focus on learning and using general academic and domain-specific vocabulary. Academic vocabulary refers to those words that are commonly found across content areas (e.g., summarize, predict, analyze), whereas domain-specific vocabulary refers to those words that are unique to particular content concepts (e.g., terms needed to read and discuss photosynthesis, the Industrial Revolution, solving algebraic equations, communicative diseases, volleyball, or engine rebuilding). Of course, there are also words (e.g., power, evidence, force, structure) that may be considered general academic vocabulary, but actually have substantially different meanings across content areas and should be addressed in context. CCSS-ELA include the focus on vocabulary because researchers have identified gaps in academic vocabulary and domain-specific vocabulary as contributing factors in weak reading comprehension, especially in middle and high school.[15]

CCSS-ELA Foundational Literacy Standards K-5		
Grade 1: Phonics and Word Recognition, CCSS-ELA #3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words e. Decode two-syllable words following basic patterns by breaking the words into syllables. f. Read words with inflectional endings. (CCSS-ELA p. 16)	**Grade 4: Phonics and Word Recognition, CCSS-ELA #3** Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words a. Use combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to read accurately unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context and out of context. (CCSS-ELA, p. 16)	**Grade 5: Fluency, CCSS-ELA #4** Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension a. Read on-level text with purpose and understanding b. Read on-level text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings c. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary. (CCSS-ELA, p. 17)

[14]Kamil, Borman, Dole, et al., 2008; Torgesen, Houston, Rissman et al., 2007.
[15]Hiebert, 2008; Kosanovich, Reed, & Miller, 2010; Kamil, Borman, Dole, et al., 2008; Torgesen, Houston, Rissman et al., 2007.

CCR Standard for Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use, CCSS-ELA #6

Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression. (CCSS-ELA, p.25)

Grade 4: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use, CCSS-ELA #6	Grades 10-12: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use, CCSS-ELA #6
Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being (e.g., quizzed, whined, stammered) and that are basic to a particular topic (e.g., wildlife, conservation, and endangered, when discussing animal preservation). (CCSS-ELA, p. 29)	Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression. (CCSS-ELA p. 55)

Implications of Shift #5 for school and district leaders

The inclusion of a spiral focus on conventions and knowledge of language throughout the grades will require ELA teachers to commit to teaching those skills specified for each grade level or band and support the use of common editing checklists by students across grades within a school. School and district leaders will need to ensure that teachers have time to discuss the language standards and how they will hold themselves accountable for working with students to develop proficiency in the use of language conventions.

The second strand of the language standards, an intense explicit K–12 focus on both academic vocabulary and domain-specific vocabulary, will require vertical and grade level discussions to align vocabulary development and emphasis. Schools and districts will need to provide time for teachers to discuss and agree upon what words are essential for students to know and use within and across content areas.[16] School and district leaders should be able to observe that a focus on vocabulary is evident in all classrooms. Some teachers will likely need professional development support to embed a strong focus on vocabulary development across content areas beyond "assign, define and test".[17] A shared focus by all teachers on this important element of language will enable students to progressively acquire a strong academic vocabulary for reading, writing, and presenting.

What are the implications of a dual focus on language conventions and academic vocabulary development within ELA and across the content areas at your school and district?

Shift #6: Use of speaking and listening skills to communicate and collaborate

CCSS-ELA include a focus on speaking and listening skills for a variety of communicative purposes including active engagement in discussion and collaboration as well as sharing information with others. Of special note is the focus on using digital media ¬and visual displays to enhance presentations.

CCR Standard for Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, CCSS-ELA #5

Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations. (CCSS-ELA, p. 48)

Grade 2: Presentation of Knowledge and ideas, CCSS-ELA #5	Grade 6: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, CCSS-ELA #5	Grades 11-12: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, CCSS-ELA #5
Create audio recordings of stories or poems, add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings. (CCSS-ELA, p. 23)	Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information. (CCSS-ELA, p. 49)	Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reason, and evidence to add interest. (CCSS-ELA, p. 50)

Implications of Shift #6 for School and District Leaders

This shift refers to the ongoing and extensive use of oral language to communicate and collaborate through formal and informal in-person presentations and through use of technology. There are obvious implications for the availability of technology, teacher professional development, links to teacher evaluation, and assessment. Many schools and districts do not insist that all students have multiple opportunities to present each year. For this standard to be thoroughly enacted, schools and districts will need to pay attention to the amounts of presenting all students are coached into doing, regardless of the classes they take or teachers they have. Research has confirmed the relationship between receptive and expressive oral and written language beginning in the early years and the connection between active discussion and improved reading comprehension in the upper grades. For English learners, the opportunity to practice and process oral language is even more essential. It is up to school and district leaders to ensure

- that the curriculum provides multiple opportunities in every grade for informal and formal presentation, with and without technology;

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[16]See for example Marzano, 2001 and the Academic Word List: http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/resources/academicwordlist/

[17]See Allen, J. (2009). See also Meltzer, J., & Jackson, D. (2011).

- that teachers provide modeling and coaching for how to do quality presentations of content; and
- that common presentation rubrics for grades K–2, 3–5, 6-8 and 9–12, aligned with CCSS-ELA, are used to reinforce the standards for speaking and listening, enabling all students to develop these valuable skills.

What are the implications of this emphasis on speaking, listening, and presenting for your school and district?

Shift #7: Purposeful writing that uses text evidence to support reasoning

Consistent with the 2011 NAEP Framework for Writing (National Assessment Governing Board, 2010b), CCSS-ELA shifts grade 4 writing from primarily narrative in earlier state standards documents to approximately equal weighting of narrative, explanation, and argument. By grade 8, argument and explanation carry more weight than narrative writing. By grade 12, it is expected that 80% of writing will be argument and explanation. CCSS-ELA recognizes that throughout schooling students are expected to be able to communicate knowledge, ideas based upon their understanding of topics, and events and underscores the link between reading and writing. While writing from personal experience certainly has merit, most college coursework and careers require students to read and write in the content areas.

An additional contribution of CCSS-ELA is to provide extensive exemplars of student writing at grade level (see Appendix C of CCSS-ELA). Again, the parallel CCR standards for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects outline the expectation that these types of writing will also occur regularly when studying this content K–12. The examples below demonstrate the developmental progression from opinion pieces in grade 4 to arguments with clear claims, logical reasoning, and evidence to support one's point of view by high school graduation.

CCR Standard for Writing: Text Types and Purposes, CCSS-ELA #1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Grade 4: Text types and purposes, CCSS-ELA #1	Grade 8: Text types and purposes, CCSS-ELA #1	Grades 11-12: Text types and purposes, CCSS-ELA #1
Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information. (CCSS-ELA, p. 20)	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant experience (CCSS-ELA, p. 42)	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (CCSS-ELA, p. 45)

Implications of Shift #7 for School and District Leaders

One of the immediate implications for the shift toward more purposeful and frequent writing across the curriculum is that teachers may not be comfortable as writers themselves. Many teachers will need professional development support to be able to develop purposeful writing assignments, understand how to use the exemplars and rubrics provided by CCSS-ELA, and model the types of writing expected by CCSS-ELA. Teachers will need time to develop agreements about the amounts and types of writing students will do in grades K–2, 3–5, 6–8 and 9–12, as well as time to develop quality writing assignments and to review student work using CCSS-ELA aligned rubrics. Teachers will also need support in developing approaches for assessing student writing—a barrier that often prevents writing from being assigned. If school and district leaders truly want to enact this shift, which is likely to support improved student achievement in all content areas and is essential in preparing students for college and the workplace, focused attention to implementation will be needed.

What are the implications for curriculum, instruction, assessment, teacher professional development, and teacher evaluation of increasing the type, rigor, and focus of writing across the content areas for each grade band in your school and district?

Shift #8: Emphasis on disciplinary literacy through the integration of language and literacy with content knowledge

Learning to read and write "like a scientist," "like a historian," "like an art historian," or "like a literary critic," requires that instruction in history, science, the arts, and the English language arts includes plentiful opportunities to engage students in reading, discussing, and writing content-specific text. This shift in emphasis argues for shared responsibility of content area teachers for integrating language and literacy skills with content learning. College and careers require students to be able to apply their literacy skills to further content knowledge. While content area teachers have a primary responsibility for teaching the content of their disciplines, there is growing consensus that they share joint responsibility to help students further their content learning language and literacy skills.[18]

Shifting the performance expectations to encourage students to use higher order cognitive skills is another element of CCSS-ELA's major advances. Students are expected to be able to compare and contrast the information from primary and secondary sources beginning in grades 6–8. In high school, students are expected to construct their understanding of a topic using multiple sources, while mindful of discrepant information.

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[18]Heller & Greenleaf, 2007; Kamil, Borman, Dole, et al., 2008; Kosanovich, Reed, & Miller, 2010; Lee & Spratley, 2010; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008.

CCR Standard for Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, CCSS-ELA #9

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare approaches the author takes. (CCSS-ELA, p. 60)

Grade 6-8: Literacy in History/ Social Studies, CCSS-ELA #9
Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topics. (CCSS-ELA , p. 61)

Grades 11-12: Literacy in Science and Technical Subjects, CCSS-ELA #9
Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources. (CCSS-ELA, p. 61)

Implications of Shift #8 for School and District Leaders

Obviously, this shift is a game changer. For years, we have stressed the importance of reading and writing across the curriculum in grades 6–12, yet this has not been embodied explicitly in a set of literacy standards. By including the College and Career Readiness Standards, CCSS-ELA affirms that literacy development in the 21st century is far more than basic reading and writing of print text within language arts classes, but includes sophisticated analysis and creation of print and electronic text, as well as presentation, critical thinking, research, and language development in all content areas.

By aligning the CCR Standards with the ELA standards, CCSS-ELA also makes it clear that this is not "optional" or up to "teacher preference" but that reading, writing, and presenting need to be core elements of teaching and learning in science, social studies, and the technical subjects—as well as in ELA. The challenge for curriculum alignment and assessment is sizeable. Teachers will need clear expectations and support to determine how these literacy demands will be addressed throughout the content areas in grades 6–12. Shifts # 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 all have implications for implementation of the CCR Standards across science, social studies, and technical subjects. Taken together, this adds up to a need for school and district leaders to support a substantial revisiting of the current curriculum/units of study, instructional practices, and assessment in these areas.

For example,

- Do current units of study include the types of reading and writing found in the CCR Standards?

- Do current classroom and end-of-course assessments include the types of critical thinking across texts, writing, and presentation that the CCR standards require?

Instruction will also be impacted. Asking students to draw evidence-based conclusions across multiple sources is an appropriate expectation if we want students to graduate college and career ready. However, this significantly raises the bar in terms of what we currently expect from all students in science, social studies, and technical subjects and may require changes in

instructional practice for many teachers. School and district leaders will need to provide teacher professional development, time, and materials and technology to support teachers as they enact the CCR standards in grades 6–12. Finally, school and district leaders will need to ensure that expectations for classroom practice are clear and are linked to teacher evaluation. As a colleague of ours notes: "What gets inspected, gets respected."

School and district leaders should note that the CCR standards address the general reading, writing, speaking/listening, and language/vocabulary demands of ELA, science, social studies, and technical subjects. However, the CCR standards do not address the domain-specific literacy requirements of science or social studies or the reading, writing or presentation requirements of math or foreign languages. These can or will be found in the standards documents specifically outlining content and learning habits and skills for those domains. For example, five of the eight K–12 mathematical processes outlined in CCSS-Math are heavily dependent on domain-specific literacy skills within a mathematical context (e.g., finding and analyzing patterns, translating between language and symbol). As the domain-specific standards for math, science, and other subjects are released, the literacy habits and skills required to meet those standards will also demand focus. Teachers will need support from school and district leaders to analyze these and develop instructional approaches that ensure that K–12 students have the opportunity to learn and practice them.

What are the implications for curriculum, instruction, assessment, teacher professional development, and teacher evaluation of increasing the type, rigor, and focus of writing across the content areas for each grade band in your school and district?

CONCLUSION

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (CCSS-ELA) provide a roadmap for districts and schools to realign and refocus curriculum, instruction, and assessment on the language and literacy skills and knowledge believed to be central to meeting the demands of today's global economy. The adoption of CCSS-ELA by states represents the beginning of the national effort to reframe the conversation regarding K–12 preparation for college and careers. For CCSS-ELA to make a difference in everyday instruction, however, **they must be implemented with integrity at the classroom level**. We believe that for this to occur, **districts and schools must be vigilant in their attention to the implications of each of the eight shifts in emphasis** described in this white paper. This is no small task. What is being proposed by CCSS-ELA as "standard practice" represents a significant shift in the teaching and learning that currently takes place in most classrooms. The new standards pave the way for dramatic innovation in the development and delivery of CCSS-ELA aligned curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

States are taking the lead on producing and disseminating CCSS-ELA resources for district-aligned units of study, assessments that measure the standards, open educational resources that can be used for instruction, guidance for teacher evaluation, rubrics to use when assessing new materials. This will ensure that districts and schools will have tools to use when implementing the CCSS-ELA. Ultimately, however, ensuring alignment between curriculum, instruction, assessment, and teacher evaluation is the responsibility of district and school leaders.

School and district leaders must also take on the responsibility of ensuring that appropriate materials and technology are available to teachers; that teachers have access to quality teacher professional development that supports their enacting of the standards in the classroom; and, that there is time for teachers to collaboratively look at student work, calibrate grade level expectations, and share expertise. It is important to recognize that school leaders may also need professional development related to classroom observations, research-based classroom practice, and change management.

It will be essential for district and school leaders to communicate about CCSS-ELA: what the standards mean in terms of preparing students to be college and career ready, and the importance of a collective effort on the part of students, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community to insist on the types of educational experiences that the standards require. Lastly, it will be critical that district and school leaders align with state efforts to put into place the structures and policies required to adequately support quality implementation of CCSS-ELA. Taken together in districts across the country, these actions will make the difference between our K–12 students graduating with proficient skills as readers, writers, presenters, critical thinkers and researchers—or not.

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