

Rigorous Real-World Teaching and Learning

BY



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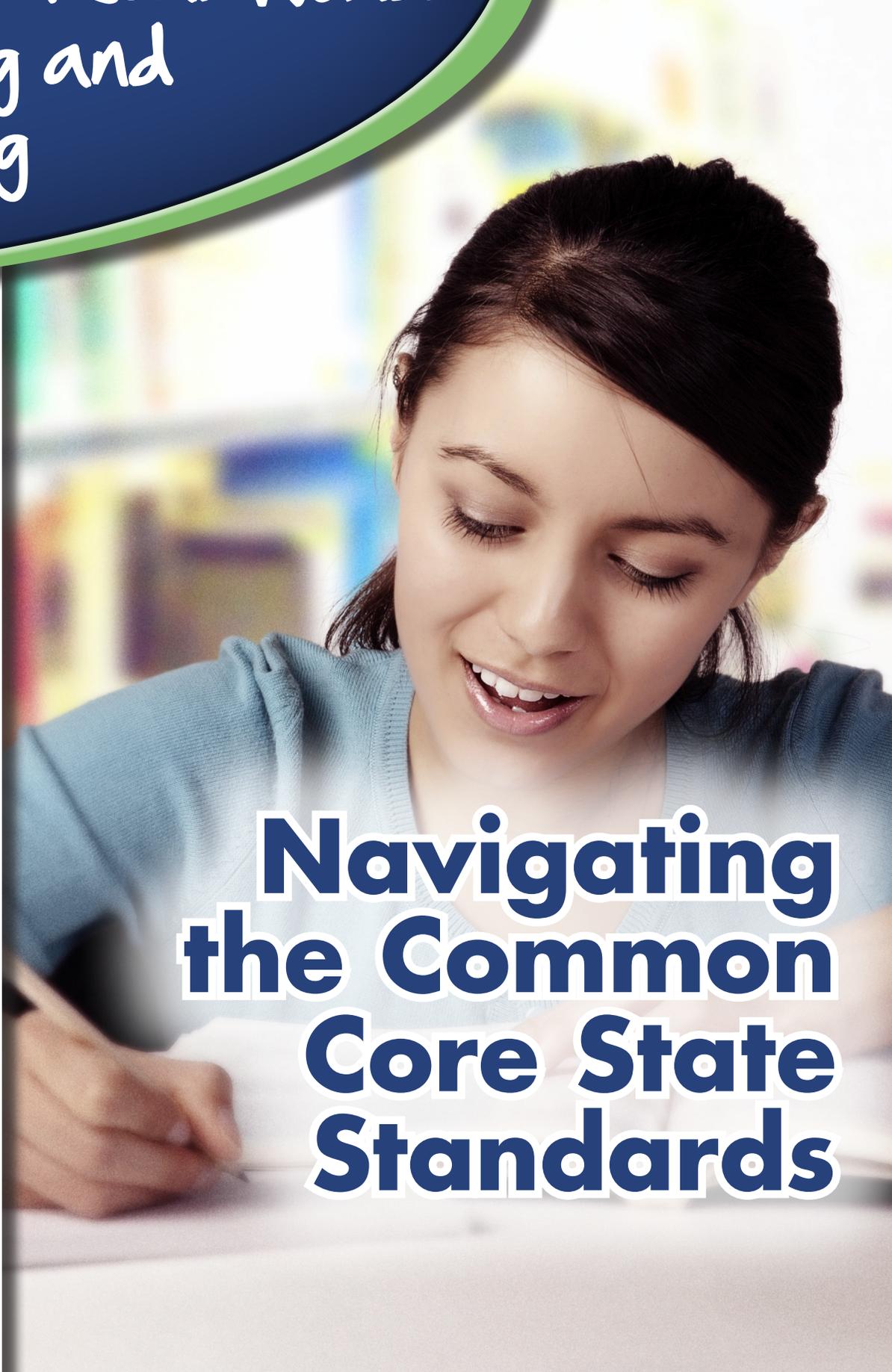
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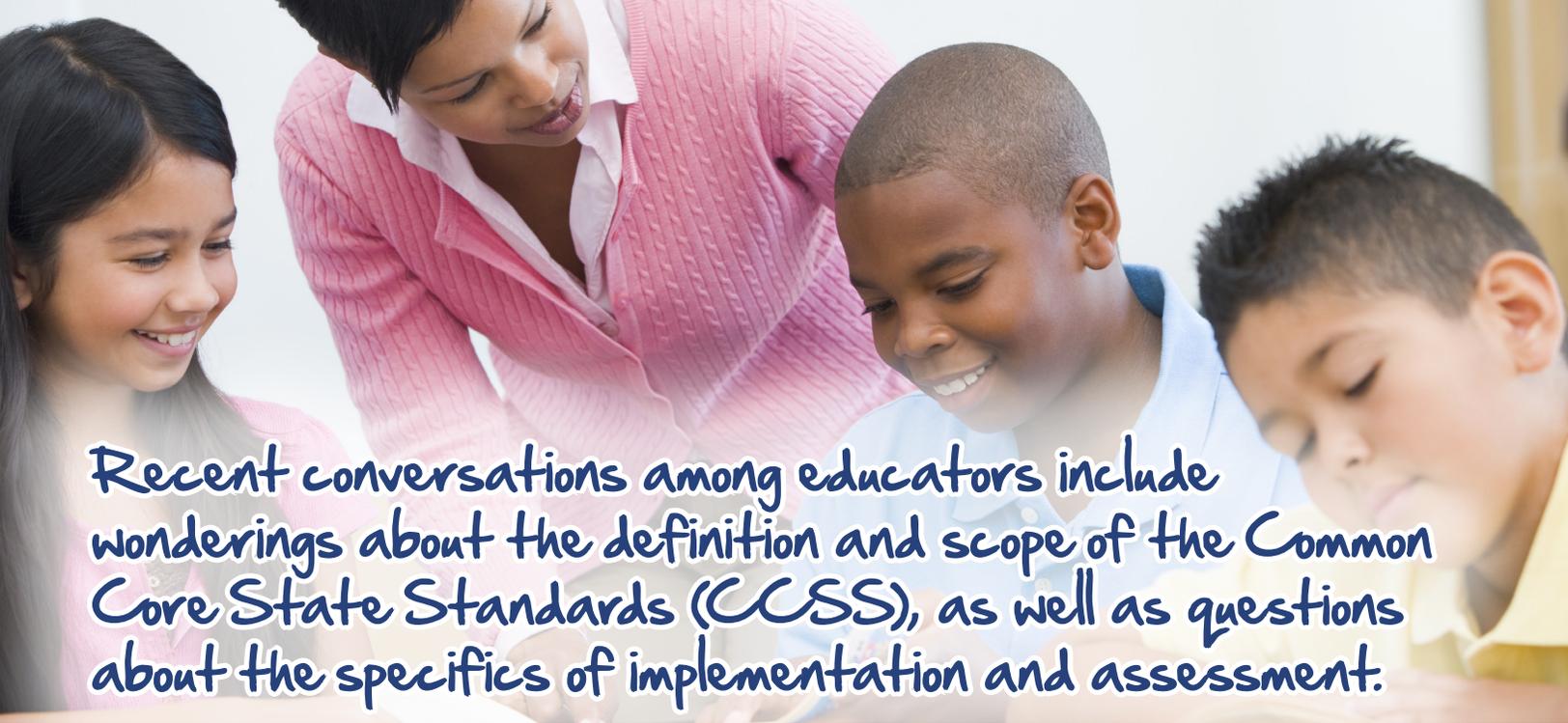
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Navigating the Common Core State Standards



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Recent conversations among educators include wonderings about the definition and scope of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), as well as questions about the specifics of implementation and assessment.

In this column, we address some of these wonderings, and provide examples of how teachers are using standards to support rigorous, intentional classroom instruction.

What are the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards are blueprints of expectations for K-12 students throughout the country in math, English language arts, and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. Currently forty-five states, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia have adopted the Common Core State Standards. Referred to as CCSS, they are designed for national use as a replacement for existing state standards that, because of vagueness, are believed to be poorly guiding instruction and subsequent learning. Defining a broad vision of “what it means to be a literate person in the twenty-first century” (p. 3), the Common Core State Standards (<http://www.corestandards.org>) illuminate scaffolded knowledge and understandings students should acquire within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate from high school

able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses, and in workforce training programs.

Why Were the Common Core State Standards Developed?

The development of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts & Literacy was led by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Student Achievement Partners, and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) to define a broad vision of what it means to be career- and college-ready, and to participate in a globally competitive society. The need to ensure equitable learning nationally for all students was established through findings being reported by many groups, including the Alliance for Educational Excellence, a Washington-based policy group; the Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) Research Center, a non-profit group that publishes *Education Week*; and the America Promise Alliance, founded by Colin Powell to create partnerships with America's youth. These and other groups echo educators concerned that only 69 to 70 percent of students are

earning a high school diploma, and that over one third of students entering college need remedial coursework. Such staggering findings have caused a national alarm that hopefully will be addressed and eliminated through implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

How Were the Common Core State Standards Developed?

The CCSS were designed using international and state standards, current empirical research, and extensive feedback from state departments of education, educators from kindergarten through college, professional organizations, and community groups. Drawing on decades of work by these groups, the intent of the CCSS is to provide teachers and parents with a clear and common understanding of what students are expected to learn prior to entering college level courses or workforce training programs. The goal of the Common Core State Standards is to ensure that all students meet or exceed the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in college and careers after high school.

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What are the Anchor Standards for Literacy?

The College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language, released in 2009, are identified by category in Chart 1. These broadly recognize what students should be learning and understanding at the conclusion of grades K-12. They were used as the foundation (or anchors) for developing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that address each area more specifically by delineating the fundamental learning and understanding that a student should acquire throughout the grades and across the disciplines. The specifics of how to implement and measure related teaching and learning have been left to the discretion of knowledgeable teachers, administrators, and state governments.

Although educators are familiar with using state standards to guide their instructional decisions, the CCSS offer a view of literacy promulgating rigor, research, relationships, and responsibility for both teaching and learning.

- Rigor is defined as comprehending a variety of increasingly complex literature and informational texts independently and proficiently. This raises the bar for increased use of poetry, drama, myths, and diverse digital media formats. There is a strong focus on analyzing the role of text structure and the author's craft in shaping the style and viewpoint of a passage. Students are also expected to critique and evaluate themes by comparing classic with contemporary texts. The CCSS offer guidance to teachers by noting suggested titles across grade levels.
- Research is infused throughout all of the anchors by identifying reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language as inseparable and interconnected. To meet the twenty-

Reading	Writing	Speaking/ Listening	Language
Key Ideas and Details	Text Types and Purposes	Comprehension and Collaboration	Conventions of Standard English
Craft and Structure	Production and Distribution of Writing	Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas	Knowledge of Language
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	Research to Build and Present Knowledge		Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity	Range of Writing		

Note. From *Common Core State Standards for English/Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects*, June 2010, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Figure 1 • College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards

first century demands, students need to be able to write to support opinions and communicate information by reading, comparing multiple print and digital sources, evaluating author claims and synthesizing information for a range of purposes. The standards honor the complexity of content writing by noting that students should analyze the historical importance of events and individuals, as well as write precise descriptions of investigative procedures so that technical work can be replicated with the same results.

- Relationships among countries and cultures provide educators with opportunities to reach beyond their classroom walls to communicate and share knowledge. New technologies enable dynamic conversations within whole class, small group, and partner structures. Collaborating to gather information, build on each other's ideas, and present evidence requires students to have control of the English language. As a result, students

must continue to be enabled and encouraged to expand their academic and topical bases of language.

- Responsibility now falls to educators to support literacy learning in all disciplines. Science and social studies teachers are invited to infuse literacy instruction using content material, while English teachers should increase the use of informational texts and digital media formats. As a result, there is a greater need for discussions across grade levels and content courses to combine resources, ideas, and expertise in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The CCSS leave room for professional judgment by not defining materials or intervention methods needed to support students. In other words, teachers must have a deep understanding of each standard so they can respond with fidelity to students through the use of differentiated instruction and interventions. Their expertise will support their doing so.



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Have CCSS Been Identified for All Disciplines?

Divided into grade-level bands, the existing CCSS define expectations within the context of English Language Arts and Literacy and Math. Standards are statements identifying essential skills to be achieved. The complexity of both the developing knowledge and performance of the skill becomes more sophisticated as students move through the grades. College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor standards provide focus for the grade appropriate standards. For example, in the anchor standards for reading, under “Key Ideas and Details,” the CCSS call for students to be able to “determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas” (p. 10).

While this anchor standard conveys the focus of learning, notice how differently it plays out across the grades. A child in kindergarten would have mastered this standard if he could, “with prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details” (p. 11). Addressing this same standard, by Grade 3 he would be able to “recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson,

or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text” (p. 12).

Notice the increase of sophistication he would have achieved by Grade 6:

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments. (p. 36)

And by Grades 11 through 12 he would be able to:

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. (p. 38)

How his scaffolded learning occurred would have been left to the judgment of his very accomplished teachers, who would be planning instruction across the grades and content subjects that support knowledge identified through the focus skill addressed in the anchor standards. To date no final sets of standards have been developed for social studies, science, and technical subjects. However, English

Language Arts and Literacy Standards address reading, writing, and oral language in **history/social science, science, and technical subjects.**

Additionally, a framework for K-12 science standards has been released that identifies the research supporting key scientific practices, concepts, and ideas that all students should learn by the time they complete high school. The framework organizes science education around three dimensions: scientific and engineering practices, crosscutting concepts (cause and effect, patterns, comparisons), and the disciplinary core ideas in the life, physical, earth, and space sciences, and engineering, technology, and the applications of science.

Standards Go Into the Classroom: Instruction that Supports Reading, Writing, Talking, and Doing

Using pseudonyms, we offer examples to illustrate how teachers across the grades are addressing selected standards.

Instructional Scenario #1

1st grade teacher Nathaniel Washington (science focus)

Standard: RI.1.5. Know and use various text features (e.g., headings, tables of contents, glossaries, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text. (p. 13)

Mr. Washington and his students are beginning the second week of a science unit on senses. This week he will focus his instruction on teaching his first graders how animal senses are both similar to and different from human senses. Specifically, Mr. Washington will teach his students how to use text features (i.e. headings, bolded words, graphics, bulleted lists) to read informational texts shared in multiple formats.

Mr. Washington begins by using the "Amazing Animal Senses" chart found at <http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/amaze.html>. He wants his students to understand how to read charts in similar formats found in informational texts. In order to do so, Mr. Washington displays the article on the document camera and thinks aloud about what he sees. While doing so he reminds students that this is how scientists read.

Mr. Washington: *Hmm. Let's see. Here is a picture of ants. This bolded word here also says "Ants" so I know this section of this chart is about ants. Right next to this picture and word is a bunch of black dots. Those dots look like big periods but they are really called bullets—not the bullets from a gun, but bullets that authors use when writing. The author used these bullets to tell details about each bolded word that is the name of an animal. As I scan down this page I can see that some of the pictures and words have two bullets and some have as many as five. That must mean there must be more information on some of these animals than others.*

As Mr. Washington thinks and reads aloud the information in the chart about animal senses, the students are engaged by pointing to the same text in front of them that includes graphics, bolded words, and bulleted lists. Mr. Washington continues to think out loud about this text comparing the animals on the page to his own senses.

Mr. Washington: *Let's see. Right here there is a picture of a bat. The bulleted list next to the bat says that it can detect animals far away using its nose leaf. Gosh, a nose leaf. That sounds like a nose that looks like a leaf. My nose doesn't look like a leaf, but I can detect, or notice, things that are far away with my nose. I can smell my dad's lasagna from the driveway as soon as I get out of the car.*

After modeling for students how to read this type of informational text, Mr. Washington next invites them to work as partners and think/read together about the information. As they do so, he will listen in to each team while asking questions, offering cues and prompts, and further explaining to eliminate misunderstandings and to strengthen understanding and growing independence. Mr. Washington is using their guided instructional time as a way to assess what his students have learned about text features, and also if his thinking aloud and modeling is transferring to his students' reading habits. Once he is secure that his students have an initial understanding of text features, he will continue to engage them in collaborative group work. During this time he will also be able to assess their growing independence and provide instructional supports as needed.

Instructional Scenario #2

4th grade teacher, Ms. Emelia King (social studies focus)

Standard: RI.4.9. Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably. (p. 14)

In order to teach the social studies theme of "making the best with what you have," Ms. King selected *Tight Times* by Barbara Shook Hazen and *The Gardener* by Sarah Stewart (Kissner, blog post, April 2, 2011). *Tight Times* is about a boy whose family is facing financial problems so he can't get the things he wants. He wants a dog most of all.

Before reading *Tight Times*, the class discussed the meaning of the term "tight times." They then looked at the illustrations to learn more about the story and to infer connections among the illustrations and the words.

Ms. King began the lesson by explaining how to use a three-column chart to identify the inference being made, the story clues that supported making the inference, and the background knowledge that also supported making the inference. She then modeled how to use illustrations to make inferences. After sharing how she uses word and picture clues to make an inference, she asked the students to look at the next section of the text as partners and use the visual and verbal clues presented by the author to make an inference. Here's the discussion that occurred during their practice that allowed Ms. King to offer more precise or guided instruction to Maria and Kris, who seemed to be confusing prediction making and drawing an inference. Notice how Ms. King's questions encouraged them to return to the text for a closer reading in order to evaluate their initial thinking.

Ms. King: *What do you think the dad is looking for in the newspaper?*

Maria: *He's probably reading the comics.*

Ms. King: *What makes you say that?*

Maria: *Well, I know when I'm sad, I read the comics to laugh. They make me happy.*

Ms. King: *That's a good prediction, but now look carefully at the words and pictures to see if the author has given you any clues that can help you to infer what the dad is reading and why he is reading that section.*

Kris: *Oh, probably he's looking at the section about jobs because right here it says he doesn't have one.*

Maria: *And people list jobs in the paper.*

Ms. King: *Good thinking and reading. Be careful to always check your thinking with the information shared by the author. Now, put that information on your chart. Be careful not to confuse making a prediction and drawing an inference. The author gives you picture and word clues to help you infer or understand what is going on.*



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Using this understanding and also your own experiences, you can then make a prediction.

Ms. King then invited them to look at the next page. Maria and Kris noticed that the parents looked happier and thus inferred that the dad had gotten a job and that the parents' money situation was getting better. They continued reading, charting, and conversing.

After offering guided instruction to other partners, Ms. King, secure that they understood the tight times of the Depression and the difference between making a prediction and drawing an inference, and the importance of validating their thinking with textual information, moved the class into a discussion about how this theme—"making the best of what we have"—could be expressed differently by authors from different time periods. She invited them to read *The Gardener*. In this story, Lydia Grace needs to leave her home in the country to live in the city with her Uncle Jim because her parents are out of work.

After reading the first page of *The Gardener*, many students started to naturally use context clues to compare the two stories:

Erin: *Oh, this is like Tight Times because the text says, "Papa has been out of work for*

a long time." So I think the theme will be making the best with what you have.

Anthony: *It also says, "We all cried, even Papa," and in Tight Times I remember the picture of the family hugging and crying on the floor. Even the dad was crying in that book, too.*

Ms. King: *Let's take a picture walk and see if we can find any other similar illustrations that will help us make inferences. You sure are using the author clues to support your thinking.*

Lajuana: *On page 10, Uncle Jim isn't smiling.*

Ms. King: *Why do you think Uncle Jim wouldn't be happy about paying the taxi driver?*

Lajuana: *Because he doesn't want Lydia Grace to come.*

Malik: *I think it's 'cause, my grappa says that, during the Depression, people didn't have lots of money to spend on other things, like taxis.*

Ms. King: *You are all using all of your author and life clues to support your thinking. How is this reading similar to the book, Tight Times?*

Malik: *Well, the boy wanted a dog but they didn't have extra money to spend on the dog, just like the uncle didn't have extra money to spend on the taxi.*

Ms. King was excited that her students were drawing inferences from information in the text that people from the past and present had similar experiences. She was also excited that her students were using textual clues to also validate or revise their thinking. Ms. King closed the lesson by challenging her students to continue to look for the theme in other books. Many students throughout the next weeks continued to point out the "making the best with what you have" theme and to identify the illustrations and word clues in the authors' messages that helped them to make inferences supportive of their predictions.

Instructional Scenario #3

9th grade teacher, Kiara Johns (writing/language arts focus—a close reading of the text)

Standard: College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing #3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. (p. 18)

Standard: W.9-10.3. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters. (p. 46)

In each of the preceding scenarios, the teachers supported learning by introducing the texts and tasks and guiding the students' understanding as they modeled how they interpret conceptual knowledge, language, text structures, and reading/thinking strategies. In the following example, the teacher, Ms. Johns, using a lesson sequence described by Fisher, Frey and Lapp (2012), begins by inviting students to interpret the meaning of *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros by first engaging them in a close independent reading of the text as a way to support inquiry. She encourages them to view the text as a problem to be solved through close reading, analysis, and discussion. Notice that she introduces the lesson by identifying the lesson purpose and *then* invites students to read the Cisneros text. Their first reading is followed by partner talk to share their initial interpretation of the message of the text and also the language Cisneros used to convey the message. After students discuss their thinking with partners and as a whole class, Ms. Johns and the students share a second reading of the text during which she models her analysis of the text message by closely scrutinizing the language the author chose to convey the message. Then, after an interactive conversation with students, she invites them to monitor their writing by precisely selecting language that truly conveys their thinking. Notice the instructional scaffolds she provides throughout to ensure their success when reading a complex text.

Use of this lesson sequence occurred because Ms. Johns had assessed that when writing narratives her students weren't including enough detail to create a vivid picture in the minds of their audiences. She decided that her students needed to dig a little more deeply into the texts they were reading in order to better understand

authors' messages and also the many styles and language(s) of writing. She thought that by doing a closer reading in order to more thoroughly analyze the language and messages being read, they would better understand how to vividly convey meaning through the language they used in their writing. She believed that by using a problem-based inquiry scenario that challenged students to analyze the complexity of the author's message and the language chosen to convey it, she would be able to monitor and then support their developing literacy skills (Grant, Lapp, Fisher, Johnson, & Frey, in press).

Establishing the purpose: The selected text was three pages from Chapter 1 of Sandra Cisneros' *A House on Mango Street*. Ms. Johns began by telling the students that the purpose of the lesson was to notice the language Cisneros used to create a "movie in their minds." She reminded them that good writers select language to enable their readers to vividly see what is being shared even when there aren't pictures. She was careful not to engage in an extended discussion about author's language in advance of the reading, since the point was to encourage students to independently investigate the text to familiarize themselves with the narrator's voice and the author's choice of language. After doing so she asked them to write a short paragraph describing the house the narrator described. These would be shared during partner talk.

First reading: Students read independently: As students read independently, Ms. Johns closely observed their reading behaviors to identify who might be struggling with the text. Because her intent was to give them a chance to independently read and interpret the text and language, she did not offer them guided instruction at this point, although she noted this information so she could guide them later if needed. She did this because she wanted them to learn how to support their own comprehension when she is not with them.

First discussion: Partner talk to check meaning: After her students finished the initial reading, they engaged in partner talk about Chapter 1 using their written descriptions. As pairs of students shared their descriptions of the house, Ms. Johns joined and listened for their attempts to use or identify vivid descriptions of the house. She heard students sharing the following ideas:

Sophie: *The narrator doesn't like this house 'cuz it is dirty and she wants a real house.*

Ernesto: *The good thing is that they don't have to pay rent and that it's theirs. They own it. So I don't think the narrator thinks it's all that bad of a house.*

Ashlei: *The author describes the house as not bein' a real one. This isn't the house that the mama dreamed of 'cuz there's no stairs.*

Second discussion: Continuous assessment supports teaching and learning: From their comments, Ms. Johns knew that her students needed to take a closer look at the text to uncover some of the descriptive language the author used. She also needed to dig more deeply with them to understand how the narrator felt about her new house. She invited them to share their thoughts as a whole class and to provide evidence of their thinking using the author's words and phrases. She also asked them to share language that was confusing them. As they shared, Ms. Johns noted their responses so she could plan what she needed to model to help them to understand the text and make the author's use of language transparent. She also wanted them to understand how to analyze their reading stumbling blocks.

Second reading: Thinking aloud about descriptive language: Next, using information she had gained from listening to her students analyze the text through the author's descriptive language, Ms. Johns conducted a shared reading and think aloud of the chapter as students read along noticing how she interpreted



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the author's use of vivid images to create a movie in the reader's mind.

Ms. Johns (reading p. 3, ¶2): *"The house on Mango Street is ours, and we don't have to pay rent to anybody, or share the yard with the people downstairs, or be careful not to make too much noise, and there isn't a landlord banging on the ceiling with a broom."*

Gosh, this sounds like a much more pleasant place to live than the last place. The narrator's last home must have been very crowded. At the very least, I think the family must have had to move around in a small space that caused too much noise for the people below. I am imagining a crowded living room, and then the bang! bang! bang! coming from under the floor. This situation must have been very annoying for both families—the narrators living above and the landlords living below. Even though the author doesn't directly say it, I'm assuming the people below were the landlord's family since he was banging on the ceiling of the narrator. Cisneros, through the voice of the narrator, writes that she had to share a yard with the people downstairs. This statement also gives me a feeling that she is telling us they lived in crowded and uncomfortable spaces. I bet you'd feel like you always had to be on your best behavior with the landlord living below. I

wonder if this caused the narrator's family to always be worried?

Ms. Johns (reading p. 5, ¶10): *"There. I had to look to where she pointed—the third floor, the paint peeling, wooden bars Papa had nailed on the windows so we wouldn't fall out. You live there? The way she said it made me feel like nothing. There. I lived there. I nodded."*

I know now that the person talking about this house, the narrator, feels 'like nothing' because she is being insulted. It says so right here. [She points to the text.] The narrator looks back up at the house, and what does she see? It says right here that she sees the paint peeling and wooden bars. It also says she feels like nothing. I bet she is embarrassed to live there. It sounds like the nun is shocked that someone could live in a place like that. Now I know how the narrator feels about this house.

Third discussion: Text-dependent questions:

After Ms. Johns finished thinking aloud about the chapter, she transitioned students to a discussion using a series of questions. The questions she prepared were based on the student's understanding of the text that had been shared during the previous discussions. They were designed to cause students to go back to the text for information that would help them to answer. Ms. Johns often used

the phrases "close reading" and "evidence from the text" so students knew that they must look closely at what the author was saying to support their answers.

A sample of the questions they were to use to scrutinize the text were:

Question #1: How does the house on Mango Street differ from the house that the narrator has dreamed of? What does she mean by a "real house?" How do you know?

Question #2: The narrator describes the house's windows as "so small you'd think they were holding their breath." What is the significance of her personification of the house?

Question #3: What is the significance of the last line of the story, "But I know how those things go." How do "things go" for the narrator and her family?

Question #4: Why is it important for the narrator to mention in the first paragraph that there are six people living in the house? Where in the fifth paragraph do we learn more about the significance of six people in the house?

While answering the questions she asked students to take notes about the specific

language the author used and what this language tells the reader. She invited them to make a two-column chart like the one below:

and laughing and playing games together. It kind of makes me sad. I just moved into my apartment so I don't have any pictures on the wall. This makes it also feel lonely.

Ms. Johns then directed the student who didn't know where to begin to use the list of visuals his partner had written. She said, "These are excellent images! Now

What the Author Writes (evidence from the text)	What This Tells Me
"The way she said it made me feel like nothing." (p. 5)	The narrator is so embarrassed; she feels worthless.
"Paint peeling and wooden bars" (p. 5)	Feels like a prisoner in an ugly place.

This segment of discussion occurred after the students had reread, answered the questions, and completed their charts. It was focused on uncovering more text-based details about the author's language and the vivid images being created in the reader's minds. When she felt that her students understood the power of language to create visual images, she asked them to write about their homes using vivid language:

Explain what it looks, sounds and feels like. Write so vividly, like Cisneros does, and with such rich language that we could all draw a picture of your home after reading your writing.

Descriptive writing modeled: Moving the students to independence: Modeling descriptive writing for her students, Ms. Johns wrote while thinking aloud, again referring to Chapter 1 of *The House on Mango Street*. On the document camera she began writing and thinking out loud so she could make the experience of thinking like a reporting writer transparent for her students. She reflected on the two-column chart to remind students that the language an author selects leads the reader to make certain inferences that lead to their conclusions.

Ms. Johns: *Let's see. My house. Well, I live in an apartment and at times it is kind of lonely. My husband works long hours and my cat hides in the closet for most of the day. I can hear the families in the apartments nearby and I get the feeling that they are eating*

Looking at the chart, she continued: *I think I will do as Cisneros did and start my paragraph by using language that describes those bare walls and how they make the whole place feel lonely. Let's see, the walls are ghost-white and bare, but a few cracks surround the windowsill. That paints a pretty vivid picture in my mind. I should also add that the blinds on the windows close out the daylight, making the room feel darker. This will add to the fact that my house is a very isolating place to be.*

Ms. Johns continued thinking and writing aloud using "I" statements as she modeled how to think about her home while visualizing what she saw. After modeling a paragraph, she asked them to work in pairs, helping each other to write vivid descriptions about their homes. As students worked, questioning each other, she heard several students say to their partners "But I can't see that! What words will help me see your house?" Hearing this, Ms. Johns knew these students were right on track as they worked together to write using vivid language that they knew the author must share and the reader must use to infer. To another partner team who seemed unsure where to begin, she said, "Close your eyes. Picture your kitchen. What do you see?" As one student closed his eyes the other student noted what his partner was saying. This list emerged:

- Dirty dishes
- Dog drinking his water—water on the floor
- Trash overflowing
- Clock stuck at 12:00

you just need to turn them into sentences describing your kitchen."

Although Ms. Johns used a text that was complex for some, her instruction with continuous assessment and scaffolded supports enabled these students to accomplish the identified lesson purpose and related standard. It also illustrated for them how to independently dig deeply in texts that when first read may seem difficult.

Addressing CCSS through Intentional Instruction

These scenarios demonstrate that the Common Core State Standards, which identify literacy skills supportive of purposeful communication and learning, are very compatible with rigorous, intentional instruction and multimodal learning. They also illustrate that there are multiple ways reading, writing, speaking and listening can be taught within the disciplines. As shown by these teachers, the CCSS are not designed to detail the sequence or composition of classroom instruction that should occur, but rather to highlight the scaffolding of skills that should be developed by students in order to have the literacy and knowledge foundations to perform well in school, as well as in any out-of-school-life situations. Each teacher chose to support learning differently, but each designed a multi-step instructional scenario that engaged students in actively



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participating in their own learning while also providing the needed scaffolds for them to succeed. The GE Foundation recently gave an \$18 million, four-year grant to Student Achievement Partners, a nonprofit organization, to support teacher throughout the country in designing, implementing, and evaluating purposeful, standards-based instruction.

While we have defined the CCSS, identified how they were developed, and how they can be implemented to support very intentional, rigorous instruction across the grades, we caution that there still exist questions and concerns regarding how the bases of knowledge identified by the standards will support students developing literacy functions. These functions include the ability to reflect; to understand their roles as citizens who can support social change; to act to promote social equity; to be creative, independent thinkers; to responsibly use all of the new literacies available to them; and to

continually produce new knowledge. As schools begin implementation of CCSS, we caution not to believe that these standards are the end to studying “what it means to be a literate person in the twenty-first century” (p. 3). Rather, we encourage teachers to see the CCSS as they were intended: as a framework of benchmarks that can be used in conjunction with all that is known about learning, assessment, and teaching in order to support social, emotional, and cognitive growth for every student. With the alarming dropout rate of about 7,000 students per day (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010), teachers need to investigate if and how the CCSS can complement their teaching and their students’ learning. Hopefully, using the CCSS as a touchstone for reflection regarding student growth will enable professional decision-making that realistically promotes learning for every student while turning around the decline of learning for so many.

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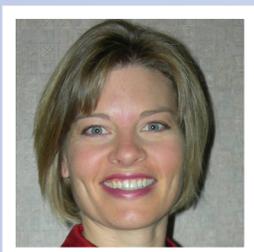
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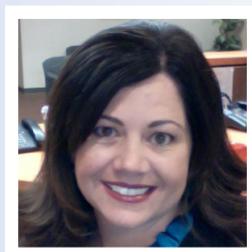
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