



Common Core Newsletter

Elementary Educator Edition

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Preparing Today's Students for Tomorrow's Challenges



Northeast Regional Center

Collaboration among the Education Service Agencies of
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5 Things Every Teacher should be Doing Now to Meet the Common Core State Standards

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Lead high-level, authentic discussions.

Teachers should craft **good questions**, and students should learn to cite textual evidence in their responses. Teaching explicit speaking and listening skills is emphasized in the Common Core standards.

Focus on **process over content**.

That doesn't mean content is not important. It means teachers shouldn't ask students to memorize vocabulary words or facts; instead, they should engage students in the gathering-information and learning process. Also, it's a mistake to think you have to nail each standard, one by one. The standards are not meant to be taught via isolated, discreet tasks. In the real world, skills overlap, and they must overlap in the classroom, too.

Create assignments for real audiences and with real purpose.

Don't assign papers that are just for the teacher. Design projects with a real purpose, such as to solve a problem in your community. Have students present their findings to an authentic audience— online, in print, or in person. Students will benefit from these rich experiences and be more motivated to learn.

Teach argument, not persuasion.

According to **Appendix A of the CCSS**, persuasive writing might "appeal to the audience's self-interest, sense of identity, or emotions," whereas a logical argument "convinces the audience because of the perceived merit and reasonableness of the claims and proofs offered rather than either the emotions the writing evokes in the audience or the character or credentials of the writer." Teach students how to gather logical evidence.

Assign increasingly difficult texts.

One way to increase text difficulty is to use text sets. For example, one teacher at the conference suggested combining *The Odyssey* with a Star Wars text and an NPR story on veterans and violence. Text sets increase engagement and help students make thoughtful connections.



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Resources
Here are a few links containing additional information, including details on what each child will be expected to know and do in each grade and tips for parents:

- <http://www.azed.gov/standards-development-assessment/parcc-assessment/>
- <http://www.azed.gov/standards-development-assessment/parcc-assessment/>
- <http://parcconline.org/>
- www.corestandards.org
- www.pta.org/parentsguide
- <http://www.azed.gov/standards-practices/files2012/05/rttt-implementation-plan-2-6-12.pdf>
- <http://www.parcconline.org/sample-item-task-prototypes>
- <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks/>



Using Text-Dependent Questions with Literature

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) require students to answer questions that require them to read and attain a deep understanding of text. These text-dependent questions should be part of each day's instruction and can be used across the content areas. When reading literature, students can answer text dependent questions at a variety of cognitive levels and can follow a certain progression of questioning (Fisher & Frey, 2012).



For example, students might be asked to answer some initial questions for **general text understanding**, followed by some questions about **key details**. Then, students can answer questions about **vocabulary** and **text structure**. Teachers can then guide students to answer questions aimed at the **purpose** of the text. Students will be challenged to understand the text deeply when they are asked to answer questions requiring them to make **inferences** about how parts of the text relate to the whole text.

Finally, students can answer questions that require them to state their **opinions**, **make arguments**, and **make inter-textual connections** based on text evidence. Text-dependent questions require students to think critically about their reading. Students should also get in the routine of asking text dependent questions of themselves and of their peers as text is discussed throughout the day. Fisher, D. & Frey, N. (2012). *Principal Leadership*.

Questioning Strategies for Intermediate Grades

Questioning the Author (QtA) is a strategy that engages students actively with a text. QtA strategy encourages students to ask questions of the author and the text. The following are sample questions:

"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."
Albert Einstein



Is/But Chart:

Allow students to collect different definitions of poetry and prose from different sources.

Create a 2 sided chart that states "Poetry Is..." on one side and "But Prose..." on the other side. Students fill in the charts with information collected from all sources.

(RL.4.5) Beck, I.L., McKeown, M.G., Hamilton, R.L., & Kugan, L. (1997). *Questioning the author: An approach for enhancing student engagement*

What is meant by the phrase, "Put on your thinking cap," in paragraph 4?

What is the meaning of _____ on page 2?

Which words help the reader understand the meaning of ___ in paragraph 5?

What does it mean to have the Midas touch?

How does this reference help the reader understand the character in the story?

Teachers can monitor students' understanding of text by examining the questions they ask of the author.
(Beck, McKeown, Hamilton & Kugan, 1997)



Common Core & Mathematics

FOCUS ON THE MATHEMATICAL PRACTICES

The Habits of Mind of a Productive Mathematical Thinker: MP1 & MP6

These two Mathematical Practice Standards have been grouped together because they represent the habits of mind that we are hoping to develop in our math students.



What is MP1?

The first practice requires students to start a problem by looking for entry points and explaining to themselves the meaning of the problem. Students need to make conjecture, plan a pathway (rather than jumping in), monitor their progress and change course when necessary. When students finish a problem they need to check using a different method or representation (consider equations, verbal descriptions, tables, graphs or diagrams) and then ask themselves, Does this answer make sense? Proficient students should also understand the approaches of others and be able to identify correspondences between different approaches. This practice focuses on the process of arriving at the answer, not the answer itself. This practice does not mean "Problem Solving Fridays" or POW but rather a daily habit of mind for approaching any problem.

How do I encourage MP1?

- Ask what information they need and how to start.
- Provide ample wait time throughout a problem allowing students to go down a variety of paths.
- Have students reflect on how a problem relates to previous work.
- Ask students to construct their own solution pathway rather than following a provided one.
- Employ problems involving ideas that are currently at the forefront of the student's developing mathematical knowledge.
- Provide students the answer to a problem and ask them to create a strategy that would lead to that answer.
- Ask students to make their thinking visible by writing ideas, flow charts, underlining key information or questions they now have about the problem.



What is MP6?

The sixth Math Practice Standard, **Attend to Precision**, means mathematically proficient students use clear definitions in discussions with others and in their own reasoning. Students state the meaning of symbols they choose, including using the equal sign consistently and appropriately. They carefully specify units of measure, and label axes to clarify the correspondence with quantities in a problem. They calculate accurately and efficiently, express numerical answers with a degree of precision appropriate for the problem context. This practice standard is much more about precision in language and communication than it is about accurate calculations. Students should be sharing ideas using grade appropriate concise language and descriptions. Tasks may require the student to present solutions to multi-step problems in the form of valid chains of reasoning, using symbols such as **equal signs** appropriately.

How do I encourage MP6?

- Insist that students to Present solutions to multi-step problems with valid chains of reasoning, using symbols appropriately
- Not "1 + 4 = 5 + 7 = 12"
- Rather, "1 + 4 = 5
5 + 7 = 12"
 - Or, "1 + 4 = 5 and 5 + 7 = 12"
- Being clear and precise when defining variables
 - Not "Let G be gasoline" – Rather, "Let G represent the amount of gasoline in gallons"
 - Not "A = apples" – Rather, "A represents the number of apples"

AIMS to PARCC UPDATES

ADE recently sent Sarah Gardner and Jessica Eilertson from the Assessment Section to Flagstaff, Show Low, and Chinle to discuss the transition from, and differences between, the AIMS tests to the PARCC Assessment. Near capacity crowds listened attentively and still had many additional questions about how the changes in the assessment will affect their teaching and their students' scores.

In March of 2012, the items in the AIMS Item Bank were reviewed for alignment to Arizona's Common Core Standards. It was discovered that most of the items aligned to the Common Core; however, since the POs are "granular" and the Common Core standards are more "global," the dually-aligned items only partially cover the Common Core standards. When Arizona educators selected the items for the 2013 and 2014 assessments, the majority of the items were dually-aligned with AZ CC Standards. It should be noted that most of the dually-aligned items have been seen by students on previous test administrations.

Over the last two years, AIMS passages have been written and field tested with greater text complexity and at higher Lexile levels. The 2012 assessments utilized many of those higher text complexity/Lexile levels passages in an operational capacity. Several multi-part questions were shown as sample items from the PARCC site.

Additional questions were gathered from the crowd and will be compiled with questions from the other regional sessions. Answers will be provided on a single shared document e-mailed to the participants.

The slide presentation from the session has also been posted on the [Northeast Regional Center's website](#), and when we receive the additional Q & A, they will be posted there as well.

Northeastern Region's Featured Lighthouse School/District: Show Low Unified District



The Show Low Unified District has been recognized as a "Lighthouse" school for its exemplary Common Core implementation by the Northeastern Regional Center (NEAZRC). This recognition is designed to recognize schools/districts within the Northeastern region with exemplary common core implementation initiatives. It is the NEAZRC's honor to highlight the work Show Low has done embracing the Arizona Common State Standards.

Show Low as an "early adopter", started their move to the Arizona Common Core Standards (ACCS) in 2010. Stephanie West, Show Low's Curriculum Director, received an e-mail from Arizona School Administrator's Director, Deb Duvall, about attending trainings at the Common Core Institute. With Arizona well represented at the Institute, Show Low's transition began at the same time ADE was modifying Math and ELA standards for Arizona.

Cooperation from their school board to increase contract days for professional development was vital, and Show Low began to design their training plan. Training focused on the building principals as instructional leaders, detailing what the implementation of ACCS for English Language Arts and Math "looks like" in the classroom. The plan continues to evolve with the next iteration featuring the PD structure being "building driven" as opposed to "district driven". Show Low believes the benefits of this model will fit well with their new teacher evaluation instrument as principals are very familiar with the ACCS and their application.

Show Low shares the challenge common to so many districts; *time* to work with teacher groups, and the time to find affordable resources for the classroom with the rigor and depth that ACCS demands. Their regular schedule for K-5 teachers includes meeting once a month at a district level for data review, benchmark and pacing guide revisions in ACCS implementation. Grade 6 – 12 meet twice a year for full day sessions covering the same topics. Thursdays throughout the year have two hours reserved for all K-12 collaboration. This allows for integration within the HS, especially with CTE.

Show Low models the work and adapts some of the resources that PARCC, Smarter Balance, Achieve, and leading states such as New York and Kentucky have put into place. Stephanie also keeps track of the work that ADE is doing to further the implementation of Phase II trainings in K -12 classrooms. Show Low's collaborative work with administrators and teachers has kept the focus on rigor and is expected to continue raising student achievement scores.

College & Career Ready

"At the desk where I sit, I have learned one great truth. The answer for all our national problems - the answer for all the problems of the world - come to a single word. That word is "education." Lyndon B. Johnson

