

CCSS INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE GUIDE



This guide provides concrete examples of what the Core Actions for implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts in grades 6-12 look like in daily planning and practice. It is designed as a developmental tool for teachers and those who support teachers and can be used to observe a lesson and provide feedback or to guide lesson planning and reflection. For all uses, refer to the CCSS for English Language Arts and Literacy (corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy).

The Shifts required by the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy are¹:

1. Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction
2. Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational
3. Regular practice with complex text and its academic language

Date:

Class:

Teacher:

Unit or Lesson:

Standards Addressed:

The Core Actions should be evident in planning and observable in instruction. For each lesson, artifacts or observables might include: lesson plan, text(s) and materials, tasks, teacher instruction, student discussion and behavior, and student work. When observing a portion of a lesson, some indicators may be appropriately left blank.

CORE ACTION 1: Focus each lesson on a high quality text (or multiple texts).

INDICATORS	EVIDENCE OBSERVED OR GATHERED		Notes:	
A. A majority of the lesson is spent reading, speaking, listening, and/or writing about a text(s).	<p style="text-align: center;">—————→</p> <p>There is no text under consideration in this lesson.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">—————→</p> <p>The lesson is focused on a text or multiple texts.</p>		
B. The text(s) are at or above the complexity level expected for the grade and time in the school year. ²	<p style="text-align: center;">—————→</p> <p>The text(s) are below both the quantitative and qualitative complexity expected for the grade and time in the school year.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">—————→</p> <p>The text(s) are at or above both the qualitative and quantitative complexity expected for the grade and time in the school year.</p>		
C. The text(s) exhibit exceptional craft and thought and/or provide useful information.	<p style="text-align: center;">—————→</p> <p>The quality of the text(s) is low – they are poorly written and do not provide useful information.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">—————→</p> <p>The quality of the text(s) is high – they are well written and/or provide useful information.</p>		

¹ Refer to Common Core Shifts at a Glance (achievethecore.org/ELALitShifts) for additional information about the Shifts required by the CCSS.
² Refer to achievethecore.org/ela-literacy-common-core/text-complexity/ for text complexity resources.

CORE ACTION 2: Employ questions and tasks that are text dependent and text specific.

INDICATORS	EVIDENCE OBSERVED OR GATHERED		
A. Questions and tasks address the text by attending to its particular structure(s), concepts, ideas, and details.	<p>Questions and tasks do not refer directly to the text and instead elicit opinion answers.</p>	<p>Questions and tasks repeatedly return students to the text to build understanding.</p>	Notes:
B. Questions and tasks require students to cite evidence from the texts to support analysis, inferences, and claims.	<p>Questions and tasks can be answered without reference to evidence from the text.</p>	<p>Questions and tasks require students to cite evidence from the text.</p>	
C. Questions and tasks attend to the academic language (i.e., vocabulary and syntax) in the text.	<p>Questions and tasks do not explicitly attend to academic language or focus exclusively on domain-specific vocabulary.</p>	<p>Questions and tasks intentionally support students in developing facility with academic language.</p>	
D. Questions are sequenced to guide students in delving deeper into text and graphics. These inferences should relate to key ideas of the text.	<p>Questions do not follow a clear sequence or are all at the same level of depth.</p>	<p>Questions are sequenced to support and challenge students in deep examination of the text.</p>	

CORE ACTION 3: Provide all students with opportunities to engage in the work of the lesson.

INDICATORS	ILLUSTRATIVE STUDENT BEHAVIOR	EVIDENCE OBSERVED OR GATHERED	
A. The teacher provides the conditions for all students to focus on text.	Students persist in efforts to read, speak and/or write about demanding grade-level text(s).	Notes:	<p>The teacher does not provide students opportunity and very few students demonstrate this behavior.</p> <p>The teacher provides students opportunity consistently and all students demonstrate this behavior.</p>
B. The teacher expects evidence and precision from students and probes students' answers accordingly.	Students habitually provide textual evidence to support answers and responses.		
C. The teacher creates the conditions for student conversations and plans tasks where students are encouraged to talk about each other's thinking.	Students use evidence to build on each other's observations or insights during discussion or collaboration.		
D. The teacher acts on knowledge of individual students to promote progress toward independence in grade-level literacy tasks.	When possible, students demonstrate independence in completing literacy tasks.		

This tool is for use by teachers, those providing support to teachers, and others working to implement the CCSS for English Language Arts and Literacy – it is not designed for use in evaluation. This version of the guide includes notes only. A separate version that includes a numerical scale is also available. The guide is intended for use in conjunction with the CCSS Instructional Practice Guide: Supplement for Reflection Over the Course of the Year. Both tools are available at achievethecore.org/instructional-practice.

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