K-12 Reading: Common Core Instruction

Overview

The K-12 Reading section of the *Oregon Literacy Plan*, **"K-12 Reading: Common Core Instruction,"** was written as an informational resource for teachers after Oregon adopted the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) & Literacy. The purpose is to two-fold:

1) To explain and illustrate how ELA & Literacy Common Core instruction looks in K-12 ELA and content-area classrooms

2) To situate the *Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework* in a support role for implementation of Common Core instruction.

The first chapter, "K-5 Teachers: Laying Foundations *for* the Common Core," discusses Common Core Foundational Skills instruction: critical content for **learning to read well**. The second chapter, "K-12 Teachers: Building Comprehension *in* the Common Core," discusses K-12 Common Core State Standards comprehension and vocabulary instruction: critical content for **learning to read well in all subjects**. Both chapters focus on the K-12 Common Core goal of college and career-readiness without the need for remediation.

The Overview provides context for these two chapters. It summarizes Common Core background, rigor, emphasis, *Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework* support, and SMARTER Balanced assessment.

Common Core Background

When Oregon adopted the *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* in (October 2010), our state joined other states in the pursuit of a common, standards-based education for our students in kindergarten through high school. **Common standards can increase the likelihood that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in college and the work place.**

Because skillful reading, writing, language use, and speaking and listening are similar across the states, common standards make sense. They make possible common assessments, common achievement goals for grade-level groups, and efficiencies of scale for instructional and professional development materials. By implementing the Common Core, Oregon will benefit from an efficient, standards-aligned integration of instruction, assessment, and resources.

Instruction in the *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects*—"the Standards"—will prepare Oregon students and students in other Common Core states to be proficient in the four strands of the English language arts skills—*Reading, Writing, Language, and Speaking and Listening*. Most importantly, Common Core proficiency will enable Oregon students to meet the increased reading demands required for an **Oregon Diploma, college, careers, and citizenship.**

College and Career Readiness Back-mapping

The **College and Career Readiness (CCR)** Standards, the backbone of the Standards, describe the literacy skills all students need *when they graduate.* The grade-specific **Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** describe the literacy skills, corresponding to the CCR Anchor Standards by number, all students need *when they finish each grade.* Keeping the college and career focus at the forefront of kindergarten through grade 12 implementation is critical to ensure rigor from grade to grade and that the end goal is attainable.

Although a superficial glance at the Common Core might make it seem initially that the Standards are general and not fully specified, deeper consideration reveals that they are specified by a unique "back-mapping" design. Back-mapping considers the end result first—**what we want all students to be able to do when they graduate.** Then, standards for each grade level, working backward from grade 11/12, to 9/10, to 8, etc., are identified to enable students to reach the final result—literacy skills for **college and career readiness at graduation without the need for remediation.** A back-mapping design supports the preparation of all students to be successful in school, from the beginning of school, and proficient in reading, writing, and speaking and listening required for an Oregon Diploma. From a design perspective, there isn't a standard in the CCSS that is not required for student success after high school.

Common Core Emphasis

How are the Common Core State Standards for **Reading** different from Oregon's standards? **First,** they include **Literacy Standards for developing students' reading skills in the content areas**, not previously included in Oregon's standards. Literacy Standards are **specific to** history/social studies, science, and technical subjects and **parallel to** the ELA Informational Text Standards. In fact, the wording is the same except for content-area differences. Across all classes, students read, study, understand, discuss, and write about *complex, high-quality* grade-level informational text (*Appendix A*, pp. 5-17). It is this emphasis in the Common Core that provides the quality and frequency of practice students need to hone literacy skills for success in school *and* for college and career-readiness.

Second, the Common Core State Standards include the expectation that **students will read a greater volume of high-quality, complex text than before, particularly informational text**. In the early grades, for example, students *listen* to *complex, high-quality* texts (*Appendix B,* pp.14-76) and, as they become better readers, gradually are able to read some on their own. In upper elementary, middle, and high school, students read high-quality texts in all of their classes with complexity levels that challenge and motivate (*Appendix B,* pp. 63-183). Reading challenging texts *daily* improves vocabulary and comprehension skills while expanding knowledge. It is important to note that while the Standards emphasize rich literature for English language arts (ELA), they also place increased emphasis on informational text (literary non-fiction) in ELA classes.

Common Core Rigor

Oregon, like many other states that have adopted the Common Core, is directly addressing the **impact low reading achievement has on students' readiness for college and careers**. Unfortunately, high school graduates who are poor readers become postsecondary college or career students who must

struggle intensely to succeed (Wirt, Choy, Rooney, Provasnik, Sen, & Tobin, 2004). There is also evidence that traditional standards, curriculum, and instructional practice just hasn't done enough to help students become proficient readers who can handle the complex texts required for success in college and careers (Betttinger & Long, 2009; Hoffman, Sabo, Bliss, & Hoy, 1994). The Common Core aims to improve students' reading achievement year by year **through the use of complex, high-quality texts across all classes**, the end goal being college and career-readiness without the need for remediation.

Students Not at Grade level

But what if students are not reading at grade level? How will they be able to read high-quality, grade-level texts as specified in the Common Core? The Introduction to the [Common Core State Standards](#) *(*p. 6) addresses these questions by defining areas *not included* in the Standards. One of them is reading interventions: "The Standards set grade-specific standards but do not define the intervention methods or materials necessary to support students who are *well below* or *well above* grade-level expectations."

Oregon's reading guidance, the *[Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework](#)* (http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2568), addresses reading interventions for students. The overall purpose of the *Framework* is to ensure students are

- Reading grade-level text or above by the end of first grade
- Developing grade-level or above reading skills K-12 across all classes
- **Receiving intensified instruction to help them read at grade level, if they are not.**

The Framework is designed to help districts and schools prepare students to read at grade level or above.

Common Core and the *Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework*

The Common Core addresses the **"what"**—grade-level expectations for students, and the *Framework* addresses the **"how"**—strategies for instruction and assessment to ensure that students who are *at risk of not meeting* the grade-level expectations will be able to meet them, and that students who are reading *at grade level or above* will continue to make commensurate progress.

Good news for Oregon is the alignment and synergy between the Common Core and the *[Oregon K–12 Literacy Framework](#)* (the *Framework).* A striking example is the emphasis in the *Framework* on literacy across the content areas, which is echoed in the Common Core*.* While the *Framework* was completed a year prior to the Common Core, they share the same research base; they are aligned*.*

*T*he *Framework,* adopted by the State Board in 2009, features a comprehensive approach to reading using a differentiated instructional model, **Response to Intervention (RTI)**, based on student data. In addition to guidance on setting reading goals, assessing, and differentiating instruction, the *Framework* discusses strategies and resources for providing **explicit** comprehension and vocabulary instruction and utilizing **effective teacher delivery**.

To help districts and schools implement a differentiated instruction model *gradually*, the [Professional Development for the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework](#) *portal* was developed. It features

multiple series of **ready-to-use** "lesson" modules (audio presentations with Power Point slides, activities, and related resources) presenting key concepts and related understandings teachers and principals need to implement a comprehensive reading program with an RTI model. Intended for use with **professional learning communities or grade-and-department level teams**, the professional development is designed to be embedded, on-going, and reaching full implementation over time. The professional development portal is organized around the six components of the *Framework*: Goals, Assessment, Instruction, Leadership, Professional Development, and Commitment.

Common Core Assessment: SMARTER Balanced

Finally, there's another change related to assessment that requires some awareness. Oregon is a lead participant in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). The SBAC is developing an assessment system aligned to the Common Core (see SMARTER Balanced Assessment FAQs at http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?=3265). One important change is the use of performance-based assessment items (e.g., open-ended, constructed responses) along with multiple choice (selected response) items. In other words, changes to improve instructional rigor also include the addition of **production responses on assessments**. Instructionally-speaking, the language, reading, writing, and thinking required for an open-ended response is different from what is required for a selected response. **How then will we help students become comfortable and proficient with performance based tasks?** . . . The answer: Use the Common Core State Standards to determine the focus of instruction and identify **what** students need to know by the end of each grade, and use the *Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework* for resources and implementation suggestions for **how** to support *all* students to ensure they are reading at grade level or above.

Common Core Instruction

Common Core instruction for reading will be discussed in the following two chapters. Because the K-5 Common Core Foundational Skills provide the necessary *foundation* for learning to read, they are addressed separately in "K-5 Teachers: Laying Foundations *for* the Common Core." The College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards for Reading and the associated grade-specific K-12 Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are discussed in "K-12 Teachers: Building Comprehension *in* the Common Core."

Both chapters open with reflection questions for teachers, highlight key features of the Common Core, link the Common Core with the *Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework*, present implications for classroom implementation, and provide resources for getting started.