

Module 1:

Instructional Implications of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.
Session 2: Informational Text, Grades 6—12 ELA



Session Description

Participants will examine the 6-12 grade-specific Reading Informational Text Standards of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.

Expected Outcomes

- Become familiar with the 6-12 CCSS Reading Informational Text Standards.
- Identify standards that may be new or represent a new emphasis for Oregon teachers.
- Become aware of relevant resources in the ODE document *K-12 Teachers: Building Comprehension in the Common Core*.

Agenda

- Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)
- CCSS Reading Informational Text Standards (25 minutes)
 - Partner activity – Progression of difficulty
 - Partner activity – What's new?
 - Partner activity– Standards 2, 3, 5
- Resources from *K-12 Teachers: Building Comprehension in the Common Core* and the *Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework* (5 minutes)
- Reflection (10 minutes)
 - Partner activity – How did we do?
 - What's next?
 - Reflection

Time

- 45 minutes

Audience

- Designed to be used with groups of 6-12 leaders and English language arts teachers working with grade-level partners.

Materials

- Handout copy of PowerPoint slides (suggested 6 slides per page)
- Handout Reading Informational Text Standards 6-12 (provided with this session)
- Handout Reflections Module 1, Session 2 ELA & Literacy (provided with this session)

Resources/References

- Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects
http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf
- *Oregon Literacy Plan—K-12*, K-12 Teachers: Building Comprehension in the Common Core
<http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/subjects/elarts/reading/literacy/have-you-ever.pdf>
- *Oregon Literacy Plan—K-12*, Chapter 3: Instruction, Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework
<http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/subjects/elarts/reading/literacy/chapter-3-instruction.pdf>

Slide 1

Welcome participants, and introduce the subject for today.

Suggest that participants sit in small groups with others who teach the same grade level(s).

Check to see that everyone has the handouts: “CCSS Reading Informational Text Standards 6-12,” copies of the PowerPoint slides, and the Reflection page.

Explain that one of the instructional implications of implementing the CCSS will be an increased emphasis on informational text in English Language Arts classrooms.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Preparing students to be college and career ready by graduation will mean an increased emphasis on teaching students to understand and interact with informational text. Most of the required reading in college and workforce training programs is informational in structure and challenging in content. Postsecondary education programs typically provide students with both a higher volume of such reading than is generally required in secondary schools, while at the same time providing comparatively little scaffolding.

At the secondary level, this will mean a coordinated effort across content areas. In the English language arts classroom, this will mean an increased emphasis on informational text, specifically, literary nonfiction.”

Slide 2

Go over the expected outcomes for this session.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Today we will take a look at the 10 Informational Text Reading Standards at grades 6-12, looking a bit more closely at some that may be less familiar, either because they have not been included in Oregon’s standards before at particular grade levels or because they now represent higher levels of rigor at given grades.

Also, remembering that the Standards depict WHAT students should know and be able to do, we want to highlight some of the relevant resources in the *K-12 Teachers: Building Comprehension in the Common Core* document on the ODE website suggesting HOW to support our students in successfully reaching these standards. This document is the ‘bridge’ between the CCSS and the very comprehensive *Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework*, also accessible on the ODE website.”

Slide 3

Explain that the National Assessment of Educational Progress has taken the lead in assigning relative weight to literary and informative text. At the elementary levels, it calls for a balance of literary and informational text, increasing the proportion of informational text as students advance through the grades.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test, given every two years, uses a balance of literary and informational text at the elementary level, with a growing emphasis on informational text thereafter.

This means is that by the 12th grade, 70% of the reading instruction will be devoted to informational text. This includes instruction that occurs within social studies, science, and technical subjects as well as English language arts.”

Slide 4

Explain that the proportion of materials and time devoted to informational text includes instruction across the curriculum, not just in English language arts classes. Nonetheless, fulfilling the Standards for 6-12 ELA will require much greater attention to a specific category of informational text – literary nonfiction – than has been traditional in the English language arts classes.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“One of the most significant instructional impacts of the CCSS is the increase in the quantity of literacy materials and amount of instructional time devoted to informational text. However, this does not mean that senior English classes, for example, will devote 70% of their reading time to informational texts. Rather, 70% of the reading instruction students receive across their instructional day (in social studies and science, as well as ELA, for instance) will be devoted to informational text.

Nonetheless, fulfilling the Standards for 6-12 ELA will require much greater attention to a specific category of informational text – literary nonfiction – than has been traditional in the English language arts classes.”

Slide 5

Explain that in addition to the need for students to read college and career level text by the time they graduate, including more informational text increases students’ access to text that will help them increase their vocabularies, general knowledge, language and reasoning abilities.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Including more informational text is important for several reasons.

One, as we’ve already mentioned, is that to be college and career ready, all students must be able to deal independently with challenging informational text when they graduate from high school.

Another reason for the emphasis is that by developing deep comprehension of high quality informational text, students build language and vocabulary, build knowledge of the world and the disciplines, build reasoning ability, and learn to have those active ‘conversations’ with texts that mark mature, proficient readers.”

Slide 6

Explain that in the CCSS, students’ access to informational text and their ability to comprehend it are integral to being able to meet many of the writing, speaking, and language standards as well.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Another reason for the prominence of informational text in the standards is the important part it plays in literacy, as represented by the highly integrated literacy strands in the CCSS. Students write and speak about content they have read; develop vocabulary and facility with language from reading and listening to others; conduct research to widen or deepen their knowledge, uncover the text structures that support arguments or comparisons – and then learn to organize their own arguments and analyses around those text structures.

I’m sure that when you examine the standards as a whole at your grade level, you will see the myriad ways they are connected to students’ ability to comprehend informational text.

The section 'Using and Integrated Model of Literacy' in the chapter *K-12 Teachers: Building Comprehension in the Common Core* deals in more detail with the many 'hats' that writers wear.”

Slide 7

Explain that the CCSS document defines informational text as literary nonfiction as well as historical, scientific, and technical texts. While the latter group is addressed in the content areas, in English language arts, the focus is literary nonfiction.

Point out that the emphasis is on text structure other than narrative.

Invite participants to work with their partner(s) to think of texts where their students are likely to encounter these text structures. Invite participants to share.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“While the content areas will focus on texts within their disciplines (historical, scientific, technical), in English language arts the informational text is literary nonfiction.

Which brings us to the problem of defining it within the context of the CCSS. While we find many views of what constitutes literary nonfiction, we need to keep in mind the purpose behind its emphasis in the CCSS: To help ensure that all students are college and career ready in literacy by the time they graduate; they are capable of reading high quality, complex text independently.

Typically students are more familiar with the narrative structure found in stories and have difficulty with the text structures found in most informational text. So, it is important that the literary nonfiction selections chosen for students include structures other than the more familiar narrative arc. Argument, for instance, is especially emphasized throughout, not only in the Reading Informational Text standards, but also in the Writing and Speaking/Listening strands.

Equally important is that the literary nonfiction selections represent high quality texts worthy of close reads.”

Slide 8

Direct participants’ attention to the Handout “CCSS Reading Informational Text Standards 6—12” and suggest that they work with partners who teach the same grade(s).

Note that on the handout the standards requiring multiple texts have been set off with additional borders.

Explain that the standards represent a continuum of proficiency from a very beginning level at K to the college and career readiness level depicted in the CCR Anchor Standards. Remind participants that each step up in task difficulty defined by the Standards is matched by a “step up” in text complexity not reflected in the individual grade-level standards themselves. Text complexity will be addressed in a subsequent session.

Invite participants to work with partners to identify the “step up” in task difficulty at each grade for several standards.

Allow about 5 minutes for partners to work.

Invite participants to report out on some of particular interest to them.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Let’s take a look at the Handout ‘CCSS Reading Informational Text Standards 6-12.’ This document has been set up to show the progression for each of the 10 standards. Those standards requiring multiple texts have been set off with additional borders since they may necessitate some extra planning effort in

identifying suitable texts and materials. Later in this session, we'll note an online resources that will be very helpful in identifying suggested works.

The Standards, as we have seen, are arranged around a framework of the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards and have been written using a 'back-mapping' strategy, identifying where students need to be on the learning progression by the end of each grade in order to make the end-point attainable. So, the standards at each subsequent grade level incorporate a 'step up' in task difficulty (as well as the 'step up' in the complexity of the texts).

With your partner(s), examine several of these 6-11/12 progressions to identify how the tasks become more difficult at each grade. Sometimes this takes quite a close read, and some of the 'steps' seem larger than others.”

Slide 9

Draw participants' attention to the distinctions that raise the level of rigor from grade to grade in Standard 8.

Note that some of the steps appear bigger than others: The jump here between 9-10th and 11-12th.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

““Let's look at how the standards 'step up' the level of task difficulty from grade to grade in Standard 8 first. If we look at these steps, I think we will agree that the step between 9-10 and 11-12 grade bands represents a 'bigger step' than the other increments. In this case, it requires some very specific content knowledge by which to evaluate the informational text.

Where else did you find relatively big jumps in cognitive demand or background knowledge? These are worth noting because they may prove a bit more challenging for us.”

Slide 10

Invite partners to look closely at the Informational Text standards at their own grade level(s) and identify elements that are new or new in emphasis.

Allow 5–10 minutes for group work.

Invite participants to share what they found and ideas they have about instructional approaches they might use.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“With partners or in small groups, read through the 6-11/12 continuum for several of the standards and think about current classroom practice at your grade level(s).

Identify standards that represent new content, new emphasis, or a new level of rigor at your grade level(s).

Then, brainstorm some possible instructional strategies and approaches you might consider using in addressing these. Since all students read the central text around which instruction is centered, scaffolding and support will be necessary for students reading below grade level. We will share some of these that you come up with.” *[Allow time to work and report out a few examples.]*

Slide 11

Explain that a “crosswalk” comparing Oregon's current ELA standards and the Common Core State Standards showed a number of changes which participants may have noted. Explain that the crosswalk is available on the ODE website at the address indicated and can be accessed by searching the ODE website for “crosswalk reading.”

Note that these may or may not be the changes from current classroom practices, but reflect changes to the standards.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“A ‘crosswalk’ comparing Oregon’s current ELA standards and the CCSS revealed a number of changes – applying more significantly to informational text than to literature, as one might guess. Here are a few of the more prominent ones. Remember, these are some of the additions to the standards, not necessarily to classroom practice.

In general, the changes are ones where the CCSS ask students to go beyond Oregon’s current ELA standards. For instance, whereas Standard 8 asks students to evaluate the validity of reasoning and the relevance and sufficiency of evidence, Oregon’s present standards specify that students only note, differentiate and distinguish fact and opinion, unsupported inferences, etc. Similarly, Standard 3 asks students to analyze how and why elements in a text interact and develop over the course of the text, while Oregon’s corresponding standards ask students to simply ‘Make connections ... within text...’

Let’s take a look at a few of these Common Core standards, then we’ll look at some instructional resources in the *Oregon Literacy Plan* that support them.”

Slide 12

Explain that the concept of *development* is central to several of the reading standards and represents a higher level of rigor than we have seen at given grade levels.

For example, the facilitator might say,

“The concept of *development* of ideas is central to several of the reading standards. The parts that are new and demand a higher level of comprehension, analysis and expression have to do with the development of central ideas and elements over the course of the text. Oregon’s current standards ask students to identify main ideas and supporting details, or to generally make connections within the text. We can see how asking students to consider how ideas in a text ‘emerge,’ ‘unfold,’ and are ‘refined’ substantially raises the level of rigor at this grade.

One question is how we are going to support all students in learning to do this. The *Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework* provides answers to that question which we will explore shortly. But first, we need to clarify for ourselves what is being asked of students in each case. These three standards, in particular, are so closely related by language that it is not necessarily immediately clear what differentiates them.

So let’s take a few minutes to look closely at them.”

Slide 13

Invite participants to work with partners to read the three standards, considering how they are different from one another.

Allow about 10 minutes for participants to work together and report out.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Working with grade level partner(s), please take a close look at Standards 2, 3, and 5 at your grade level. We can see that all of these begin with the verb ‘analyze,’ so we can see that they are all going to refer to various *part/whole* relationships.

First, read them closely to come to a common understanding of what is being asked of students in each one. Then, put into your own words what differentiates each from the other two. Reading the CCR Anchor Standards may help clarify distinctions.

Allow about 10 minutes for participants to work together and report out. Responses might include

- *Standard 2 refers to how the parts (e.g., details, supporting ideas) develop the whole (central idea).*
- *Standard 3 refers to how the parts (e.g., individuals, events, ideas) relate to other parts.*
- *Standard 5 refers to how the physical -- rather than conceptual -- parts (e.g., sentences, paragraphs) relate to the conceptual whole.*

Slide 14

Explain that the *Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework* presents 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.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Remember the question we raised earlier about how to support all students in analyzing the development of ideas? The *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, leadership, and professional development, the *Framework* includes a lengthy chapter (Chapter 3: Instruction) which includes specific strategies and resources for providing explicit comprehension instruction and utilizing effective teacher delivery.”

Slide 15

Explain that the ODE document *K-12 Teachers: Building Comprehension in the Common Core* provides a bridge between the *Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework* and the *Common Core State Standards*. This is a sampling of the “classroom snapshots” in the former document.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“The ODE document *K-12 Teachers: Building Comprehension in the Common Core* provides a bridge between the *Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework* and the *Common Core State Standards*.

One of the extensive and specific resources in the *K-12 Teachers: Building Comprehension in the Common Core* document is a series of ‘classroom snapshots.’ Here is a sampling of what the visitor would see. The document includes graphic organizers for various grade levels and text types and several sets of ‘core questions’ for various topics for students and teachers to ask, and so forth.

So, for instance, in supporting students in analyzing the structure of informational texts (Standard 5), we might see lists of words that function as transition or signal words for particular text structures; advance organizers tailored to the structure of the specific informational text; note-taking organizers for students to use as they read; and prompt sheets that focus students’ attention and ask them to reflect on the function of particular sentences or paragraphs after reading the text.”

Slide 16

Explain that this is a sampling of the ‘classroom snapshot’ depicting what a visitor would hear in a classroom teaching informational text literacy.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

“Here is a sampling of what the classroom visitor might hear. Note the important role that teacher modeling – ‘thinking out loud’ – plays in reading instruction.

For instance, we might hear the teacher modeling how to summarize a piece of informational text (Standard 2), or modeling reasoning used to evaluating the specific claims in an argument (Standard 8).

Note that while many of the comprehension strategies are similar to ones we would use with literature, there are also some significant differences: For instance, while the graphic organizer for the narrative arc is probably familiar to all students by secondary level, they are far less likely to be familiar with the patterns of argument or explication. One of the most significant difference between strategies used for literature and literary nonfiction will be those useful for Reading Informational Text Standard 8 (evaluating arguments), since there is no corresponding task we apply to fiction, drama, or poetry."

Slide 17

Invite participants to turn to their partners and give short answers to the questions.

For instance, the facilitator might say,

"So how did we do? Our goals for today were 1) to become more familiar with the CCSS Reading Informational Text standards, 2) identify some of the standards that are new (or new in emphasis) at our grade level, and 3) become aware of some of the resources on the ODE website.

Let's practice a little active learning for a minute or two as you turn to your partner and recall a few details from the session as you discuss these three questions. We know they are more likely to stay with us that way."

Slide 18

Suggest the activities listed as possible follow-ups to this session.

Invite participants to fill out the Reflections page.