



Capture the Core

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Raising the Bar: Embracing Common Core won't be easy, but it will be worth it

By Judy Burton and Dacia Toll, *U.S. News & World Report*
November 7, 2014

"Those of us who have built and sustained high-quality charter schools understand the value of setting high expectations for students and the educators who teach them. We seek educational excellence for all of our students. The Common Core State Standards give us shared clarity about what students need to be ready for college and the world beyond high school.



"The very rigor of the standards makes them a challenge to implement. Yet we enthusiastically embrace them. As we observe in classrooms where teachers are striving to reach this higher bar, it is so clear that students are benefiting."

"The universities, however, that our students will eventually attend don't expect them to write or understand mathematics differently based on where they grew up. Algebra is not different in California or Connecticut, nor is successfully articulating an

argument based on evidence. Universities expect sufficient academic capacity to succeed at the collegiate level without remediation. If we can help students master the Common Core State Standards, they will have with that capacity.

"The Common Core raises the academic bar to reflect what students need for life beyond high school in an internationally competitive world. And the higher bar is going to be uncomfortable. Our schools have significantly outperformed the traditional public schools that surround us on state tests. But as

new tests that measure the higher standards come online, our scores will tumble, and even if we are better than our peers, it will expose that we are not yet good enough."

"For those of us who believe our students are capable of world-class performance, these standards are exactly what we have been demanding."

As shared in [Achieve Newsletter](#):
Full article [:http://www.usnews.com/opinion/](http://www.usnews.com/opinion/)

PARCC Writing Tasks

Students will write three responses as part of the Performance Based Assessment (PBA) administered after approximately 75% of the school year. The three types are:

1. A literary analysis task – students will carefully consider two literary texts, answer questions about each one and write an analysis to compare ideas.
2. A narrative task—students will read one brief text and answer a few questions to help clarify their

understanding and write either a narrative story or a narrative description.

3. A research simulation task—students will analyze an informational topic presented through several articles or multimedia stimuli. Students will answer questions accompanying each text/multimedia and then synthesize their understandings into a writing. The writing rubrics for the PARCC assessment were created to score these

types of tasks.

They are more general than writing rubrics that would be used to score writing in the classroom.

To find the rubrics as well as a practice test go to www.ilwritingmatters.org



Standard #2: Writing Informational/Explanatory Texts

W.9-10.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

- of a subject,
- to help readers better understand a procedure or a process , or
- to provide readers with an enhanced comprehension of a process.

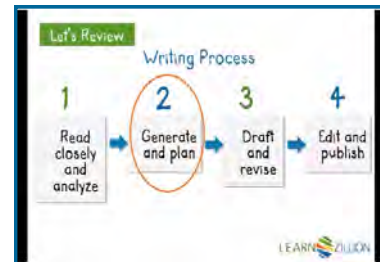
(CCSS, Appendix A)

[Click here](#) to access a sequence of process-based writing lessons where students will analyze a prompt to organize informational writing.

Informative/explanatory writing conveys information accurately. This kind of writing serves as one or more closely related purposes to

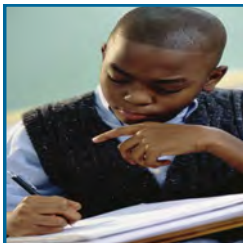
- increase readers' knowledge

LearnZillion offers a number of free reading and writing lesson videos and plans. The videos can be for teachers or teachers can use them in their classroom to assist in teaching specific components of writing.



Standard #3: Writing Narratives

W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.



The key elements of narrative writing are

- a narrative or plotline that shares real or imagined
- experiences or events
- an organization that sequences events or processes in a coherent fashion
- a sense of closure that points to a resolution or conclusion
- a progression of

experiences or events that develops the opening problem, situation or observation

- narrative techniques that deepen the reader's appreciation of experiences, events, and/or characters

[Click here](#) for additional information on Narrative Writing from The Aspen Institute.

A Reason to Lesson Study

An editorial from our guest writer Angelika Kavroulakis, a Math Specialist at Kruse Education Center.



Too often professional educators walk away from team collaboration time feeling that their instructional needs are not met. In the backdrop of aligning learning goals to the New Illinois Learning Standards, we walk away with the *what* amidst this worthy educational reform without the opportunity to address the *how*. How shall we effectively implement these problem-solving tasks to deepen student understanding?

Lesson study is a powerful and collaborative professional development model that allows grade-level teams to address the key factor in

improving student achievement: instruction. As NCTM's *Principals to Actions; Ensuring Mathematical Success for All* points out, "To improve instructional practice, teachers need to devote more time not only to collaborative planning, but also to intentional and structured reflection" (2014). Engaging in lesson study allows teachers to shift from working in isolation to becoming a part of a culture of professionals who work together to address their students' needs directly through carefully planning a research lesson.

During Lesson Study, teachers gather to plan one lesson that introduces a topic traditionally difficult for students. They review research about the topic, plan a problem-solving lesson that highlights the mathematics students will be able to do, anticipate student responses, decide how they are going to address misconceptions and plan how they will record the movement of the lesson on the board.

Finally, this meaningfully planned lesson, written by the entire team, is then tested in the classroom. One brave teacher delivers the lesson as invited knowledgeable others and team members observe student behaviors and responses. After the lesson, the team gathers to reflect upon the lesson through the eyes of students as data is reviewed and observations of the students are shared. This data and observation is considered deeply by the team and the lesson is revised to explore how changes may enhance student learning. Another team member delivers the revised lesson and the team meets again to reflect upon how the revisions improved student performance. In the end, all team members and observers participate in *kampai* (a celebratory term used in Japan similar to the English word, 'cheers') to celebrate the great outcome of the team's hard work and professional development.

Ultimately, the careful planning of one lesson and how it looks in the classroom carries over to the professional educator's understanding of *how*

PARCC PBA Practice Tests
Due to be released December
<http://www.parcconline.org/practice-tests>

Learn more about
Lesson Study :

www.lessonstudyresearch.neth
<http://globaledresources.com>
www.lsalliance.org



Comprehensive System of Learning Supports

The Effects of Poverty On Students

Statistics in the 2011 U.S. Census Bureau survey revealed that 660,000 children (about 21.6% of the population under 18) in the state of Illinois were living under the poverty level (\$22,314 for a family of 4).

Children in poverty are at a greater risk for poor academic achievement, school dropout, abuse and neglect, behavioral and social emotional issues, physical health problems, and developmental delays.

Chronic stress connected to living in poverty can adversely affect students' concentration and memory

skills. Poor nutrition contributes to delayed brain development. Parents who deal with economic hardships may experience chronic stress, depression, marital distress and exhibit harsher parenting actions. Negative familial interactions can be linked to students' difficulties with social and emotional skill development.

In *How Poverty Affects Classroom Engagement (2003)*, Eric Jensen outlines seven specific ways that poverty can negatively impact student engagement. Possible classroom intervention strategies for



Classroom Strategies to Reduce the Impact of Poverty

Health and Nutrition

Poverty effects the amount and type of food students eat. Skipping breakfast makes it harder or students to listen, concentrate and learn. Two primary foods for the brain are oxygen and glucose. Working together, they produce energy for cell function.

- ◆ Have students do slow stretching while taking slow deep breaths to increase oxygenation.
- ◆ Movement and drama triggers the release of glucose. Proper glucose levels are connected to stronger memory and cognitive functions.

Vocabulary

Students living in poverty hear an average of 13 million words by the age of 4 while students in middle to higher socio-economic families can hear anywhere from 26 to 46 million words within the same time period.

- ◆ Incorporate vocabulary into daily rituals...Acknowledge students using the word throughout the day.
- ◆ Share words on 3x5 cards for students to make sentences in groups or pairs.

Effort

Effort can be taught. Students may be giving you feedback through their disengagement. Build relationships with students and create lessons that engage and intrigue students.

- ◆ Create curiosity builders—mystery box or bag for discussion or writing assignment.
- ◆ Offer choice within lesson ideas...include daily positive feedback on progress.

Hope and a Growth Mind-set

If students are looking at their future and see only negative views then why try? Hope—or lack of hope and a student's attitude (mind-set) combined can be a positive or negative combination in the classroom.

- ◆ Teach students that their brain can grow...include quality feedback –prompt, actionable and task-specific.
- ◆ Focus on affirming and reinforcing effort in feedback..."Stick with this!" or "You got this!"

Cognition

Children living in poverty tend to show cognitive issues, including short attention spans, distractibility, quality of work, and difficulty generating solutions to problems. Students may either act out or shut down.

- ◆ Directly teach students to organize, study, take notes, prioritize ideas, and problem solve.
- ◆ Teach students sequentially; immediate recall of words, then phrases, then whole sentences.

Relationships

Parent and child relationships can be disruptive in families living in poverty. Instability at home may negatively impact social emotional skill development.

- ◆ Build relationships with students...talk with them about their family, hobbies, things that are important to the student.
- ◆ Use "we" language in conversations...."We can make this work." or "We're in this together".

Distress

Distress—acute and chronic stress—can be toxic. Brain development, academic success and social competence can be negatively impacted by reducing attention control, boosting impulsivity and impairing working memory.

- ◆ Allow choices and options vs "control" over the student's activities. Encourage responsibility and leadership.
- ◆ Teach coping skills...ie use a simple "if this, then that" strategy for solving problems. Use social stories to allow brainstorming of possible solutions.

Related [Conditions for Learning Indicators](#) are included in the [Rising Star on IIRC](#) school improvement tool and accessible at the [ISBE Learning Supports](#) web site.

Jenson, E. (2013, May 1). How Poverty Affects Classroom Engagement. *Educational Leadership*, 24-30.
Effects of Poverty, Hunger, and Homelessness on Children and Youth. (n.d.). Retrieved November 20, 2014, from <http://www.apa.org/pi/families/poverty.aspx>

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