



Unpacking Common Core State Standards for Secondary Students

Marzano Center Staff
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Learning Sciences Marzano Center
3001 PGA Boulevard
Palm Beach Gardens, Florida 33410
717.845.6300
MarzanoCenter.com

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Remember learning how to make potholders with those square weaving looms and stretchy fabric loops? At first, someone probably coached you through the process. You lined up a row, flipped the loom 90 degrees, and wove more loops in the opposite direction. Eventually, as you were finishing off the edges, it all made sense; you had turned chaos into order. As you pulled up the final corner loop, envisioning your creation hanging on a hook in the kitchen, you felt truly accomplished. With that skill mastered, you could move on to experimenting with patterns and textures, or making more advanced objects.

Similarly, Common Core State Standards help high school students take the skills they've acquired throughout elementary and middle school and build upon them, deepening their knowledge and preparing them for bigger things, such as college and the workforce.

How is Common Core different from what we're used to?

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) aren't just about memorizing and reciting facts; they also help students get ready for life. According to the CCSS Initiative, one mission of CCSS is to give high school students standards that are "robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers."

Take reading, for example. According to the e National Assessment of Educational Progress, about half of the material in the typical state reading test for a fourth grader is literary in nature, while the other half is informational. For eighth graders, the focus shifts a bit to a 45 percent/55 percent ratio. By twelfth grade, however, 70 percent of the reading material in standardized tests is informational and only 30 percent is literary. Students are now ready to apply their reading skills toward increasing their understanding of other subjects.

ELA Requirements

Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge; it is thinking that makes what we read ours. -- John Locke

High school students have to go beyond reading comprehension. By the middle of tenth grade, the new standards require them to read from a wide array of world literature and analyze particular points of view or cultural experiences. They may also need to determine the author's point of view and reason for writing a text. If the author uses rhetoric, for example, the student should be able to explain why.

Reading is only part of it. High school students need to be able to write clearly and coherently in a variety of styles for different audiences. They also should participate in collaborative activities, such as group, one-on-one or teacher-led discussions, to deepen their knowledge of literary material.

Math requirements

Likewise, math lessons don't end when a student knows how to plug numbers into a formula and solve a problem. In geometry, for example, knowing how to find the area of a cylinder isn't

enough. Students must also be able to identify the shape of the cylinder when it's presented as a two-dimensional cross-section or when it is rotated. In addition, they should know how to use that cylindrical shape to describe similar objects, such as a tree trunk or a human torso. To make sure that they really understand it, students must also be able to draw the shape on graph paper.

Seems like a little much?

The new standards are rigorous, but the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model addresses the challenges teachers face while trying to meet them and makes it easier to get on track and stay ahead of the curve. Domain 2 is crucial for secondary teachers because it focuses on helping students interact with new knowledge, rather than just memorizing it.

The way you plan a lesson or unit is important. By scaffolding information, you can arrange content so that each new piece of information builds on what the students already know. Organize lessons within each unit so that students can apply their knowledge in authentic ways. Just be sure to adhere to the content standards established by your district.

Piecing it all together

As a high school teacher, you know that your kids have their metaphorical looms and they already know how to weave the loops together. If you look at implementing Common Core State Standards as a way to give them what they'll need to turn out more than just potholders, new initiatives that come down the pipeline may fall into place more easily for you.

Contact a Marzano Center advisor to learn more about the professional development resources and training we offer for Common Core at 1.877.411.7114, or visit us at MarzanoCenter.com, or MarzanoCommonCore.com for further readings, webinars, and video archives.

References

National Assessment of Educational Progress. (2013). *Reading Framework for the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress*. Retrieved from <http://www.nagb.org/content/nagb/assets/documents/publications/frameworks/reading-2013-framework.pdf>

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