

Dr. Katherine McKnight: Shifts in teaching and learning in response to the adaptation of the Common Core State Standards

Shift 1. Balancing Informational and Literary Texts

- Students read a true balance of informational and literary texts.
- Elementary school classrooms are, therefore, places where students access the world – science, social studies, the arts and literature – through text.
At least 50% of what students read is informational.

Shift 2. Knowledge in the Disciplines

- Content area teachers outside of the ELA classroom emphasize literacy experiences in their planning and instruction.
- Students learn through domain-specific texts in science and social studies classrooms – rather than referring to the text, they are expected to learn from what they read.

Shift 3. Staircase of Complexity

- In order to prepare students for the complexity of college and career ready texts, each grade level requires a “step” of growth on the “staircase”.
- Teachers are patient, create more time and space in the curriculum for this close and careful reading, and provide appropriate and necessary scaffolding and supports so that it is possible for student reading below grade level.

Shift 4. Text-based Answers

- Students have rich and rigorous conversations that are dependent on a common text.
- Teachers insist that experiences stay deeply connected to the text on the page and that students develop habits for making evidentiary arguments both in conversation, as well as in writing, to assess comprehension of a text.

Shift 5. Writing from Sources

- Writing needs to emphasize use of evidence to inform or make an argument rather than the personal and other forms of decontextualized prompts.
- While the narrative still has an important role, students develop skills through written arguments that respond to the ideas, events, facts, and arguments presented in the texts they read.

Shift 6. Academic Vocabulary

- Students constantly build the vocabulary they need to access grade level complex texts.
- By focusing strategically on comprehension of pivotal and commonly found words (such as *discourse*, *generation*, *theory*, and *principled*) and less on esoteric literary terms (such as *onomatopoeia* or *homonym*), teachers build students’ to access complex texts across the content areas.