



**The English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core:  
Understanding and Teaching the Big Shifts K-5  
Site-based Participant Syllabus**

### **Course Description**

This course is designed to provide an understanding of K-5 Common Core State Standards, including the history of the standards, as well as the biggest shifts from current instructional practice. Most significantly, participants will learn teaching strategies to embrace the new ELA standards, with a particular focus on strengthening classroom practice in the biggest shift areas from old to new standards, and aligning to the tasks of the new assessments.

### **Course Prerequisites**

This course is recommended for K-5 teachers, specialists, and administrative staff. Educators enrolled in the course are required to hold a baccalaureate degree.

### **Text Books/Supplemental Reading**

There is not a required textbook for this class. However, refer to weekly reading assignments and additional materials within each milestone.

### **Global Goals of the Course**

To deepen and/or apply the content and skills of the teacher's existing professional knowledge base by meeting the following global goals of this course:

1. To understand the philosophical and pedagogical belief systems that brought the Common Core into place (NBPTS 1, 2, 4, 5 ; InTASC 4,9)
2. To understand how to read the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects document in the K-5 grade band (NBPTS 2; InTASC 4,5)
3. To explore the K-5 standards, developing an understanding of the meaning and context of each standard (NBPTS 2, 4; InTASC 4,7)
4. To understand the factors inherent in determining text complexity for K-5 readers, including foundational skills needed in beginning readers (NBPTS 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; InTASC 1,2,4,6)
5. To gain knowledge and understanding of the necessity and practice of close reading in later elementary readers (NBPTS 2; InTASC 4,5)
6. To understand the concepts of disciplinary literacy, and the foundational skill of gaining academic literacy in informational text (NBPTS 2, 4 ; InTASC 1,4,7)

7. To recognize the importance of, and encourage the use of text-dependent questions and answers in all settings, K-5 (NBPTS 2,3; InTASC 1,4,5,6)
8. To strengthen the balance of informational and literary texts in current reading programs (NBPTS 2, 4, 5; InTASC 4)
9. To gain knowledge of approaches to encourage writing from sources in all types of media, and to use research in the writing process whenever appropriate for K-5 writers (NBPTS 2, 3, 4; InTASC 4,5,7)
10. To explore and redefine literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (NBPTS 1, 2, 4, 5 ; InTASC 4,9)

### Instructional Objectives

By the conclusion of the course, each participant should be able to do the following:

1. Understand the belief systems that brought the Common Core standards into place.
  - 1.1 Recognize social, political, and global factors that lead to a need for new standards that addressed College and Career Readiness.
  - 1.2 Consider the educational implications of such factors, as well as the changing student in today's classroom.
2. Be able to understand the format and contents of the ELA Common Core document.
  - 2.1 Read and consider the content and learnings included in the Appendixes A, B, and C of the ELA Standards document.
  - 2.2 Understand the layout of the standards, including strands, anchors standards, and grade-specific standards.
  - 2.3 Identify and understand the strands of Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language and the anchor standards embedded in each strand K-5.
  - 2.4 Consider the meaning and context of each grade-specific standard K-5.
  - 2.5 Study the assessment systems of the Common Core.
3. Understand the factors inherent in determining text complexity.
  - 3.1 Learn the quantitative dimensions of text complexity and the considerations of such measures.
  - 3.2 Explore qualitative dimensions that are involved in text complexity such as levels of meaning or purpose; structure of text; language conventionality and clarity; and knowledge demands of the text.
  - 3.3 Consider the factors that might influence the reader in terms of task, motivation, and knowledge and experience.
4. Understand the foundational skills of reading in early readers.
  - 4.1 Know phoneme-grapheme correspondences.
  - 4.2 Understand the importance of phonological awareness.

5. Understand the necessity and practice of close reading in later elementary readers.
  - 5.1 Consider the importance of close reading in building stronger readers.
  - 5.2 Explore the factors necessary for close reading to happen.
  - 5.3 Learn how to facilitate close reading of text with students within the elementary setting.
  - 5.4 Learn how to scaffold close reading activities.
6. Consider the components of disciplinary literacy and academic literacy and create atmospheres and activities for disciplinary literacy and academic vocabulary to flourish across the elementary curriculum.
  - 6.1 Explore the fluid nature of literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century across subject areas.
  - 6.2 Consider the role of literacy in the content areas of History, Science, and Technical Subjects by examining those standards.
  - 6.3 Construct activities to foster disciplinary literacy.
  - 6.4 Understand the philosophies of vocabulary acquisition.
  - 6.5 Understand the specific teaching of academic vocabulary vs. other types of vocabulary.
7. Recognize the importance of, and encourage the use of text-dependent questions and answers in reading and content areas.
  - 7.1 Explore the relationship between close, deep reading and text dependent questions.
  - 7.2 Construct text-dependent questions that encourage critical thought
  - 7.3 Explore strategies to encourage text dependent answers.
8. Strengthen the balance of informational and literary texts in current elementary reading programs and curriculums.
  - 8.1 Evaluate current reading programs and curriculums, examining for a balance of 50% literature and 50% informational text in the K-5 setting.
  - 8.2 Learn key strategies in making informational text more accessible and engaging to K-5 students.
9. Encourage writing from sources in all types of media, and to use research in the writing process.
  - 9.1 Gain knowledge in teaching elementary students the importance and process of writing from sources.
  - 9.2 Examine strategies for early elementary and elementary writers to write from and with research.
10. Explore and redefine literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
  - 10.1 Consider the role of new media in our students' lives.
  - 10.2 Recognize the importance of new and diverse "texts" and media within the standards.

## Teaching Methodology and Delivery Model

Teaching methodologies of this course are designed to support intensive, graduate level course work in an interactive setting.

Instructional plans support the content of this course, which focuses on the improvement of professional teaching expertise in any or all of the following categories: assessment, collaboration, communication, diverse learners, educational reform, instructional strategies, planning instruction, productivity, reflection on practice, student learning, subject matter, and/or technology.

- Methodologies include instructor presentations, specific skill practice, discussions, audio-visual presentations, self-evaluation, project development, course readings, research/inquiry exercises, and the synthesis of new knowledge and skills with previously acquired skills/expertise in relation to transition knowledge and content.
- The course is taught with instructor-participant and participant-participant feedback. Course content, activities, and assignments are organized into segments totaling 45 seat hours. Final projects are due within the two-week period immediately following class meetings.
- Research-based content, presentations, and assignments are supported by textbooks and additional readings/handouts designed specifically for education professionals, educator resources in print and on the Internet, notes from instructor presentations, class activity work pages, and references.
- Daily activities include a variety of research-based instructional approaches appropriate for adult learners. Class participants actively construct their own learning and make it personally relevant by acquiring and applying course knowledge/skills during hands-on practice and problem-solving activities, personal reflection, in-class presentations, whole-class discussions and activities, assigned readings, research/inquiry, projects, and collaborative work in various group formats. All are designed to make it possible for teachers and other transition-related personnel across the entire spectrum to learn the same basic content and skills with an emphasis on application to their own specific content area or grade level.

## Learning Assessment

Formative assessment of learning objectives for this course is conducted informally throughout the week via discussion, critiques, peer- and self-evaluations, journal entries, verbal and written instructor feedback, small-group sharing, and activities requiring the participants to make sense of new knowledge and/or skills within their realm of teaching. Additionally, three formative assessments are embedded within the course. Summative assessment for the course occurs in the form of a final project which requires each participant to synthesize class content and apply it within the teacher's specific teaching environment.

### Compliance with National Board of Professional Teaching Standards

The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards represents the highest level of professional achievement in the continuum of teacher professional development. There are five core principles (standards) which cover five aspects of professional educational practice: (1) commitment to students and their learning, (2) knowledge of subject matter and instructional strategies, (3) management and monitoring of student learning, (4) systematic reflection about the teaching profession to learn and grow from experience, and (5) collaborative participation in the educational learning community.

### Compliance with Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Standards

The Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium's work is guided by one basic premise: An effective teacher must be able to integrate content knowledge with the specific strengths and needs of students to assure that all students learn and perform at high levels. All teachers should meet the following standards: (1) learner development, (2) learning differences, (3) learning environments, (4) content knowledge, (5) application of content, (6) assessment, (7) planning for instruction, (8) instructional strategies, (9) professional learning and ethical practices, and (10) leadership and collaboration.

### Topics Agenda

#### **Day One: The History and Philosophy of the Common Core State Standards Initiative/ Becoming Acquainted with the Document and Standards K-5**

Discussion of course expectations and assignment overview; consideration of social, political, and global factors that led to a need for new standards that addressed College and Career Readiness; analysis of the format and contents of the ELA Common Core document, including strands, anchors standards, and grade-specific standards; in-depth study and analysis of the meaning and context of each grade-specific standard K-5; consideration of the content and learnings included in the Appendixes A, B, and C of the ELA Standards document; consideration of the assessment systems of the Common Core within the PARCC and SMARTER BALANCED consortiums.

#### **Day Two: Reading Foundational Skills, Text Complexity, and Close Reading**

Understanding the foundational skills of reading in early readers; awareness of the significance of teaching phoneme-grapheme correspondences; understanding of the importance of phonological awareness; consideration of the factors inherent in determining text complexity, including the quantitative dimensions of text complexity, the qualitative dimensions that are involved, and the factors that might influence the reader in terms of task, motivation, and knowledge and experience; analysis of the necessity and practice of close reading in later elementary readers, including the importance of close reading in building stronger readers; exploration of the factors

necessary for close reading to happen, as well as how to facilitate close reading of text with students within the elementary setting

**Day Three: Using Texts: Creating Text Dependent Questions and Answers; Balancing Informational and Literary Text in the Elementary Curriculum**

Study of the balance of informational and literary texts in current elementary reading programs and curriculums; consideration of factors that affect the reading of informational text; learning of key strategies in making informational text more accessible to K-5 students; recognition of the importance of text-dependent questions and answers in reading and content areas; exploration of the relationship between close, deep reading and text dependent questions; construction of text-dependent questions that encourage critical thought; exploration of strategies to encourage text dependent answers

**Day Four: Writing from Sources and Short, Sustained Research in Writing within the Elementary Setting**

Exploration of the importance of writing from sources in all types of media in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; activities for teaching elementary students the importance and process of writing from sources; strategies for early elementary and elementary writers to write from and with research

**Day Five: New Definitions – Disciplinary Literacy and Academic Vocabulary; Refining and Redefining our Definition of Literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Elementary Setting**

Analysis of the components of disciplinary literacy and academic literacy; exploration of the fluid nature of literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century across subject areas; creation of atmospheres and activities for disciplinary literacy and academic vocabulary to flourish across the elementary curriculum; study of the History/Social Science, Science, and Technical Subjects ELA standards; consideration of philosophies of vocabulary acquisition; understanding of the specific teaching of academic vocabulary vs. other types of vocabulary in informational reading; exploration and redefinition of literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century; consideration of the role of new media in our students' lives; recognition of the importance of new and diverse "texts" and media within the standards K-5.

**Final Projects**

Assignments/ assessments should reflect that each participant is accountable for a high degree of learning; thus, an appropriate combination of group and individual assignments/assessments that can accurately determine an individual's achievement level is required.

In keeping with best instructional and assessment practices, this course requires participants to demonstrate synthesis and application of course knowledge in an applied final project linked to the instructional objectives of this course. Assessment

of the project should not be limited to the quantity of work submitted but should carefully consider the quality and intellectual value of the work.

Final projects are due within two weeks of the end of class. Projects submitted during the third week “grace period” will have their grade reduced one full letter grade. No papers will be accepted past the grace period, and participants will, consequently, forfeit credit for the course. Papers are expected to be properly formatted and submitted to the instructor either in person or via mail or an email attachment.

Participants taking professional development unit (not-for-credit) courses must attend all scheduled class sessions and complete all formative assignments. However, they will be exempt from completing the final summative project unless otherwise noted. Proof of seat hours will be presented to the participants after completing course reflection via the student portal and all hours are met.

### Grading

Throughout the course, participants will engage in both formal and informal formative and summative assessments. Points are assigned based on a four-point criterion rubric specifically delineated for each assessment that can be further defined as follows:

**Distinguished:** The assessment is highly imaginative; demonstrates critical thought; is unique; shows substantial application to one’s own teaching or professional position; *goes above and beyond requirements*; is creative; demonstrates both breadth and depth of knowledge of transition-related subject matter; shows individual’s personality; is professional in presentation and appearance; and demonstrates considerable effort. The assessment is exceptionally completed and demonstrates clear understanding of the tasks, gives explanations, and shows how the assessment applies to a teaching/learning situation. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in “Distinguished” on the course rubric.

**Proficient:** The assessment is well-organized and complete; is effectively and clearly presented; demonstrates clear understandings; applies what has been learned to the author’s own classroom situation; clearly shows connections; is detailed; and is thoughtful and supported with ideas. A thoroughly completed assessment demonstrates that the participant shows awareness of the tasks, gives explanations, and shows how the assessment applies to a teaching/learning situation. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in “Proficient” on the course rubric.

**Basic:** This is the lowest passing grade. The assessment meets minimum requirements; includes general information but lacks descriptive detail; shows limited application to teaching/learning; and lacks originality. This denotes work that does not meet **all** aspects of standards for academic performance in a graduate-level

course. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in “Basic” on the course rubric.

**Unsatisfactory:** The assessment is missing evidence or information; is sloppy and poorly organized; demonstrates only surface understandings; shows no evidence of application to the author’s own teaching situation; is poorly written; and does not meet minimum standards for academic performance in a graduate-level course. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in “Unsatisfactory” on the course rubric.

The assessments for this course are weighted as follows:

Participation and Reflection	30%
Formative Assessments	30%
Summative Assessments	40%

Letter grades are based on 100 points possible and assigned based on the university grading scale.

### Academic Honesty and Integrity

All participants are expected to maintain academic honesty and integrity by doing their own work to the best of their ability. Academic dishonesty (cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, etc.) will result in the participant receiving a zero for that assignment or paper.

### Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and The Americans with Disabilities Act, participants who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, which might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the first session. Reasonable academic accommodations, aids, and adjustments may be made as needed to provide for equitable participation.

### Attendance

Participants are required to attend all classes as well as participate in class discussions, small group activities, and projects. Absence from any part of the class will require that you withdraw from the class. You will need to contact The Connecting Link at (888) 550-5465 in the event this occurs.

### Emergency Statement

In the event of an emergency declared by the college or by The Connecting Link, we reserve the right to alter course plans and the attendance policy. In the event of an emergency, TCL will contact the instructor/participants with alternative educational plans for the course.



### Late Work and Make-Up Policy

Participants are expected to keep pace with in-class assignments and evening at-home assignments. If a situation arises in which an assignment cannot be completed, the participant is expected to make arrangements with the instructor for the timely submission of such work. All work is due not later than two weeks after the class ends. Failure to complete all work in this time frame will result in an **incomplete** or a grade of **F** for the work, depending on the reason for the delay.

### University Compliance

Course content and instruction are bound by policies associated with the university granting academic credit for the course. Such policies include, but are not limited to: academic integrity and honor codes, institutional objectives and grade grievance procedures. These policies are located within the official academic catalogs which can be accessed through the university's official website.

For Valparaiso University Graduate School Student Learning Objectives please visit:  
[www.valpo.edu/gradschool](http://www.valpo.edu/gradschool)