The English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core:
Understanding and Teaching the Big Shifts 6-12
Online Participant Syllabus

Course Description

This course is designed to provide an understanding of 6-12 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

Educators enrolled in the course are required to hold a baccalaureate degree.
No prerequisites for this course are required.

System Requirements

- Computer with word processing software
- Internet access connection
- Online video viewing capabilities/Adobe flash player
- Software capable of reading PDF files

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.
Educators in MA should refer to http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/0311.pdf for a review of Pre-K to 12 standards for their state.

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 (NBPTS 2; InTASC 4,5)
3. To explore the standards, developing an understanding of the meaning and context of each standard in grades six through twelve (NBPTS 2, 4; InTASC 4,7)

4. To understand the factors inherent in determining text complexity for 6-12 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 for middle school and high school students (NBPTS 2; InTASC 4,5)
6. To understand the concepts of disciplinary literacy, and the foundational skill of gaining academic literacy in informational reading (NBPTS 2, 4 ; InTASC 1,4,7)
7. To recognize the importance of, and encourage the use of text-dependent questions and answers (NBPTS 2,3; InTASC 1,4,5,6)
8. To strengthen the balance of informational and literary texts in current reading programs through the 6-12 curriculum, with more weight put on reading informational text in the curriculum (NBPTS 2, 4, 5; InTASC 4)
9. To gain knowledge of approaches to encourage writing from sources in all types of media, to use research in the writing process, and to learn to write argument (NBPTS 2, 3, 4; InTASC 4,5,7)
10. To explore and redefine literacy for the 21st century adolescent (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 6-12 classrooms.
2. Understand the format and contents of the ELA Common Core document in grade bands 6-12.
    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.
    2.4 Consider the meaning and context of each grade-specific standard 6-12.
    2.5 Study the assessment systems of the Common Core within the PARCC and SMARTER BALANCED consortiums in relationship to the standards.
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 middle and high school reader in terms of task, motivation, and knowledge and experience.

4. Understand the necessity and practice of close reading in middle and high school students.

    4.1   Consider the importance of close reading in building stronger adolescent readers.

    4.2   Explore the factors necessary for close reading to happen.

    4.3   Learn how to facilitate close reading of text with students within the middle and high school setting.

5. Consider the components of disciplinary literacy and academic literacy and create atmospheres and activities for disciplinary literacy and academic vocabulary to flourish across the 6-12 curriculums.

    5.1   Explore the fluid nature of literacy in the 21st century across subject areas.

    5.2   Consider the role of literacy in the content areas of History, Science, and Technical Subjects by examining those standards within in the Common Core Document.

    5.3   Construct activities to foster disciplinary literacy

    5.4   Understand the philosophies of vocabulary acquisition in older readers.

    5.5   Understand the specific teaching of academic vocabulary vs. other types of vocabulary in informational reading.

6. Recognize the importance of, and encourage the use of text-dependent questions and answers.

    6.1   Explore the relationship between close, deep reading and text dependent questions.

    6.2   Construct text-dependent questions that encourage critical thought.

    6.3   Explore strategies to encourage text dependent answers.

7. Strengthen the balance of informational and literary texts in current 6-12 reading programs and curriculums.

    7.1   Evaluate current reading programs and curriculums, examining for a balance of 30% literature and 70% informational text in the 6-12 setting.

    7.2   Learn key strategies in making informational text more accessible and engaging to 6-12 students.

8. Encourage writing from sources in all types of media, and to use research in the writing process.

    8.1   Gain knowledge in teaching middle and high school students the importance and process of writing from sources.

8.2   Examine strategies for writers to write from and with research.

9. Learn the components of argument writing.

9.1   Consider the difference between persuasive writing and argument writing.

9.2   Create classroom activities and lessons to help students learn to support claims with reasons and evidence.

10. Explore and redefine literacy for the 21st century.

10.1   Consider the role of new media in our students' lives, specific to the lives of today's adolescents.

10.2   Recognize the importance of new and diverse "texts" and media within the standards.

Teaching Methodology and Delivery Model

Teaching methodologies used in this course are specifically designed to maximize learning in a guided, graduate-level, online distance-learning model. Each course facilitator is trained and/or experienced in facilitating graduate-level online courses as well as the specific content and skills of this course.

1. Online methodologies include instructor/expert presentations, directed skill practice, asynchronous class and group discussions using threaded discussion questions, peer evaluation, self-evaluation, portfolio development, and the synthesis of new knowledge and skills in designing grade-specific lesson plans or other educational applications of knowledge and skills.

2. The course is taught in a supportive learning environment with teacher-participant interaction and feedback. Class participants interact with other professionals via the Forum area by replying to existing posts as well as creating new threads on topics of their choice.

3. Content focuses on the presentation of advanced concepts linked to instructional strategies which accommodate learning needs of a diverse student population.

4. Course content, activities, and assignments are organized into "milestones" that participants complete during the span of the course. Course content is intended to cover material equal to 45 seat hours of instructional time.

5. Class participants actively construct their own learning and make it personally relevant by acquiring and applying course knowledge/skills to their own teaching situation.

Learning Assessment

Formative assessment of learning objectives for this course is conducted informally throughout the course via discussion, critiques, peer- and self-evaluations, journal entries, instructor feedback, small-group sharing and activities requiring 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.

Final Projects

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 and will be submitted to the instructor within the allotted class time. Unless the instructor states otherwise, all papers are expected to be properly formatted electronically.

Participants taking courses for professional development unit (not-for-credit) must follow the same Participation Expectations as posted in the course syllabus. Participants will complete readings and tasks as outlined in the Task List. Forum Postings are also required. However, participants will be exempt from completing the Formative and Summative assignments unless otherwise noted. Proof of seat hours will be presented to the participants after completing the state required course evaluation located on the student portal.

Assessments and 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%

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 Director of Academic Affairs prior to the first session. Reasonable academic accommodations, aids, and adjustments may be made as needed to provide for equitable participation.

Attendance

Participants will have specific dates to start the course and complete the required assignments. They will need to contact The Connecting Link at (888) 550-5465 should they not be able to complete the online class in the time given.

Late Work and Make-Up Policy

Participants are expected to keep pace with assignments and expectations. 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. 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 polices 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.