
Preface

One of the ways that teachers improve is by learning from other teachers. . . . Isolation is the enemy of all improvement.

—Andy Hargreaves, 2011, p. xx

The intention of this book along with its companion volume, *Common Core for the Not-So-Common Learner, Grades K–5: English Language Arts Strategies* is to provide a carefully selected sample of instructional strategies that address each anchor standard to help teachers meet the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) with diverse adolescent students. It is not a step-by-step prescriptive manual for successful implementation of the CCSS, nor does it attempt to provide a comprehensive guide to meet the academic, linguistic, social, and emotional needs of diverse learners. This book identifies the CCSS anchor standards for English language arts and literacy in content-area subjects, provides guidance on how to interpret those standards for Grades 6–12 diverse learners in terms of academic performance, and suggests possible strategies to achieve them. Teachers are encouraged to examine the strategies contained herein, experiment with them in their own classes, investigate as well as interpret their effectiveness, modify them to support their own instructional goals, and work collaboratively with fellow teachers to create methods, techniques, and activities that are most suitable for their own population of students.

It is our hope that some of the instructional and implementation strategies addressed in these pages will spark new ideas and begin conversations about teaching practices that are shared by many. In this way, this book should not be perceived as the definitive account of necessary strategies to use with diverse learners but as the impetus that compels all educators to better understand research-based best practices, to further search for answers to critical questions regarding the CCSS implementation with various student populations, and to collaboratively share their findings with colleagues.

It is no surprise that the CCSS will present many challenges for teachers who instruct diverse learners. Educators will read and try to interpret each individual standard for their grade and content area and will no doubt be faced with numerous questions, such as the following:

- *What does each standard actually require students to know and be able to do?*
- *How do I help struggling students meet the standards?*
- *Must I change what I normally do in my daily instructional practices in light of the CCSS?*
- *How can I develop and support students' literacy skills in my content-area classes?*
- *Where am I going to find the resources to create lessons that address individual standards?*

These questions are answered in detail in this book. We address the CCSS by first explaining what each anchor standard requires students to know and do in broad terms. We identify what we call an *Anchor Performance* for each of the 32 anchor standards, which represent a critical skill students should be able to develop in light of the CCSS. We further suggest both broad and specific strategies for helping diverse and struggling learners succeed with each of these standards, and we share our ideas for changing instructional practices. Furthermore, we offer a range of additional resources at the end of each chapter for readers to explore instructional ideas that are too numerous to contain within these pages.

What we suggest is considering the three *R*'s when implementing the CCSS with diverse learners: rigor, relevance, and research! Engaging students in both rigorous and challenging academic tasks that are relevant to their college and career readiness needs is a must and is well-supported in the literature (see Daggett, 2011, and the Rigor/Relevance Framework, a tool developed by the International Center for Leadership in Education at <http://www.leadered.com/rrr.html>). Yet teachers cannot forget about research-based best practices and the type of scaffolded, differentiated instruction that will support academically and linguistically diverse learners in achieving success.

In light of the complexity of implementing the CCSS, teachers can no longer work in isolation to overcome the various obstacles in order to initiate effective instructional practices. There are no quick fixes, and although it may be a starting point, adding a few instructional strategies to one's teaching repertoire will not bring about the systemic change that is vital for diverse learners to succeed. As *Washington Post* blogger Strauss

(2010) also noted, “No set of standards has much meaning without equitable resources to ensure that teachers are trained well enough to reach kids who live in widely different circumstances” (para. 11). We hope that this book, and its companion version for Grades K–5, will be added as a ready-to-use, practical resource to the professional libraries of schools across the country.

Further, we would like to invite our readers to reflect on their own teaching effectiveness, to engage colleagues in collaborative efforts to do so as well, to investigate new models of instruction, to review and revise curricula, and to go beyond the scope of this book to begin and sustain the essential collaborative conversations and interventions that are vital to school reform.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

Chapter 1 establishes the framework for the rest of the book and discusses who the not-so-common learners are and what the CCSS mean for them and their teachers. Chapters 2 through 6 follow the same internal organization. Each chapter focuses on one strand of the Common Core State Standards in the following order: Language (Chapter 2); Reading Literature (Chapter 3); Reading Informational Text (Chapter 4); Writing (Chapter 5); and Speaking and Listening (Chapter 6). The order of the chapters follows the order in which the CCSS are presented (see www.corestandards.org), with one exception. Since academic language development is so critical for linguistically, culturally, and academically diverse students, we emphasized the importance of paying attention to language skills by intentionally disrupting the CCSS order and placing that chapter ahead of all others.

Within each chapter, we offer the rationale for explicit, strategy-based instruction related to the target Common Core anchor standards. Following the presentation of our recommended set of core strategies that are aligned to the CCSS and anchor performances, we discuss anticipated outcomes and instructional challenges readers may encounter. We close each of these five chapters by offering authentic classroom vignettes documenting promising practices from middle and high schools with diverse student populations. A list of key resources related to the chapter is also added to encourage further exploration of the topic.

Chapters 4 and 5 address not only reading informational texts and writing in English language arts, but they also examine the 6–12 grade-level literacy standards in history/social studies as well as science and technical subjects.

Chapter 7 stands apart from the previous six. As a continuation of our earlier work, *Collaboration and Coteaching: Strategies for English Learners* (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010), here we outline the types of instructional and noninstructional collaborative practices that teachers may wish to engage in to support the successful implementation of the CCSS for all learners.

It is our hope that the CCSS will represent new windows of opportunity for consistency in grade-appropriate expectations, ensuring equitable education for and meaningful engagement of all learners, and enhance teacher collaboration in curriculum development and instructional delivery. We wish you an *uncommonly* productive time exploring this book!