

PART III
Common Core State Standards:
Examining What We Already Know About Elementary English Language Arts Standards
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"The future depends on what we do in the present."
~ (Mahatma Gandhi)

Educators are charged to prepare all students for their future. To accomplish this effectively, it is critical that we grasp the depth and scope of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) by examining what we know and need to learn about the next generation of standards. Each week, we will explore together another facet of this intriguing set of standards.

The organization of the complete document clearly links college and career readiness to what and how we teach. In this way, the College and Career Readiness Standards for Reading serve as the capstone of the CCSS for English Language Arts (ELA). Let's take a look at these standards, how they connect to the expectations of the ELA CCSS, and the way in which the standards link to what we already know for our students in grades K-5.

The elementary student will be expected to demonstrate mastery in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and using language effectively across a variety of subjects and content areas, which is the crux of the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading (CCR). In Kindergarten, students will be asked to recall characters, setting, and main idea (Key Ideas and Details R. CCR. 1-3), recognize common types of texts (Craft and Structure R. CCR. 4-6), compare and contrast the experiences of characters within and across texts (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas R. CCR. 7-9), and engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding (Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity R. CCR.10). These skills will increase in rigor as students read across the disciplines and master texts of increasing complexity. As we will learn, the CCR provides the continuum of skill and knowledge representative of "Begin with the end in mind."(Covey, S. 2001).

The College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading and the CCSS for ELA may appear somewhat similar to the current organization of the Connecticut Mastery Test and Benchmark Assessment strands of: (A) Forming a General Understanding, (B) Developing an Interpretation, (C) Making Reader/Text Connections, and (D) Examining the Content and Structure. The current Connecticut Grade Level Expectations will frame our understanding about the content and rigor in ELA as we each associate what we know now to what we are learning about the Common Core State Standards.

The Reading Standards are organized under Reading Informational Text (nonfiction) and Reading Literature (fiction), reiterating the section titles of Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, and Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity. These standards are similar in content but differ in complexity and detail. For example, Standard R.CCR.1 states: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from text. Standard RL.4.1 states: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inference from the text. Similar to the current standards in Connecticut, the CCR represents the broad standards, whereas the Reading Standard promotes the more specific grade level expectation.