

‘Both and’ Literacy Instruction K-5  
A Proposed Paradigm Shift for the Common Core State Standards ELA Classroom

**Introduction**

A language arts curriculum congruent with the Common Core State Standards must contain the practices and materials that will ultimately lead to developing *every* student’s capacity to read and comprehend complex text independently and proficiently (CCSS Reading Standard 10). It needs to do so in ways that make clear the joys and riches found in text. This paper discusses those elements in three main sections: foundational literacy practices, reading comprehension, and volume of reading.

What do we mean by ‘both and’ literacy instruction? Just that *all* of the following elements need to be available in a way that provides a coherent experience for students: solid grounding in the foundational reading skills, development of academic language (vocabulary and syntax), the steady growth of knowledge, experiences that lead to the judicious use of comprehension strategies, the ability to express thoughts and learning clearly through speaking and writing, and the capacity and motivation to sustain a volume of engaged reading.

A solid program has to be built upon a sound research and practice base. It needs to be doable by a wide variety of teachers. It must flex to a variety of student skill levels and offer students support without making unreasonable demands on a teacher’s energy.

All this takes time. It takes lots of time. To be successful, a program must be generous in allocating adequate time for students to engage in the practices that will make them strong readers, and allow more time yet for the students who need more. Richard Allington has argued for decades that students need lots of time to read and to be directly helped to do so (2002). Along with students, teachers need time set aside to come together, focus on instruction and curriculum, and learn about these best practices. This is all easier said than done of course. But there is a good chance that time will be allocated well *if*: schools and teachers value the work highly, can keep themselves honest about time constraints, can agree to focus on all the ingredients of a full literacy program, and can encourage reading, writing, speaking and listening to percolate through all subjects.

Teachers need to be able to envision how the components of such a comprehensive program can fit into their current classroom practices. *The intent here is to help teachers determine which aspects of their current practice are inherently aligned with the CCSS and which aspects of existing practices must be added to, adapted or shifted.* The lens for this examination will be the elements identified above.

Through conducting such an evaluation, educators can make thoughtful decisions regarding how to adjust their practice and materials, while schools and districts can consider rationally and carefully what shifts in scheduling, programming, school priorities and resource allocations need to be put into place as supports for the teachers and children. The resultant decisions can then have a strong likelihood of leading to healthy literacy learning outcomes for a great number of children.

## **Building a Strong Foundation in the Early Years**

The text complexity demands of the Common Core State Standards<sup>1</sup> make the development of a sturdy reading foundation in the early grades more essential than ever, as students will be asked to read significantly more complex text once they enter second grade and ever after. What is needed is a strategically designed, carefully sequenced foundational program with frequent, built-in opportunities for teachers to assess student progress and adjust instruction accordingly. Studies going back to the National Reading Panel (NICH 2000; Adams, 1990, Stuebing *et al* 2008) clearly show this type of approach to be optimal in supporting students' mastery of the sound/spelling patterns necessary – but not alone sufficient – for the development of proficient reading (Bus, Adriana G. and van IJzendoorn, 1999). Developing foundational capacities and the confidence they engender in young readers can bring all students into the rewards literacy can provide. In truth, as every teacher knows, the efficacy developed by being *able* to read fluently and well is, in and of itself, hugely motivational.

The states and districts that have adopted the CCSS for ELA & Literacy are serious in their intent for *all* students to achieve this level of proficiency. Those students who do not reach proficiency levels on the first exposures to the foundations of reading will need more exposures and experiences quickly. Otherwise, they risk becoming the students reading far below grade level in high school – the ones who are far less likely to graduate. (Hernandez, 2011). It is imperative to stop this cycle and reverse the cumulative effects of early reading problems. To do so, there needs to be an understanding of what might cause additional difficulty for some students so that a solid foundational reading program can be created that stops as many problems from arising as possible.

### *Alphabetic Knowledge: Accurate and Automatic Recognition of letters*

Alphabetic knowledge is how quickly students (or anyone) recognize and name a letter of the alphabet, in both lower and upper case forms. For years it has been known that students who take longer to do this are more likely to have trouble learning to read (Georgiou et al, 2008; Lervag and Hulme, 2009). This reflects the fact that letters and letter combinations once learned still need to be *recognized*, and recognized efficiently, before they can be connected to their associated sounds (Adams, 1990). Thus, some students need more (in at least some cases far more) opportunities to work with letters and letter-sound associations in order to reinforce these connections.

### *Phonological Processing*

Some students who may quickly recognize and identify learned letters or letter combinations have trouble connecting them to their associated sounds. This is called a phonological deficit (or sometimes phonological processing problem) and has also been shown to be associated with early reading difficulties (Georgiou et al, 2008; Lervag and Hulme, 2009). Similar to the process for strengthening alphabetic knowledge, these students need more opportunities to work with letters and letter-sound patterns, sometimes far more, in order to reinforce these connections. Unfortunately, some students have both these challenges, sometimes referred to as double-deficit (Tanaka et al, 2011; Wolf and

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<sup>1</sup> Demands formally begin with 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in the CCSS, but must be prepared for earlier. See Supplement to Appendix A for the current quantitative scales for text complexity ([http://www.corestandards.org/assets/E0813\\_Appendix\\_A\\_New\\_Research\\_on\\_Text\\_Complexity.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/E0813_Appendix_A_New_Research_on_Text_Complexity.pdf)).

Bowers, 1999; Cronin, 2011), and these children undoubtedly need far more opportunities both to learn letter patterns and to reinforce letter-sound associations in active, varied and well-designed ways.<sup>2</sup>

### *Vocabulary*

Many students who are born into households where there is less access to text and where language stores are not as rich or varied arrive in kindergarten with a massive gap in the numbers of words they know, use, and can recognize, possibly having heard as many as 30 million words less than some of their peers between birth and age 5 (Hart and Risley, 2003). Current vocabulary instruction is not meeting the needs of these students (Biemiller 2010). Vocabulary growth is essential to reading proficiency (NAEP, 2012; Nelson et al, 2012) especially with the complex text called for by the standards. Children need the opportunity to learn as many words as possible as early as possible (Biemiller 2010). It is far harder to catch up than to stay abreast. Contextualized and vigorous word study early in school also means children will be learning a lot more about the world, since word and world knowledge are tightly connected.

If all these challenges are present together, which is unfortunately not rare, children could potentially be facing a *triple* threat. It is not unusual for schools to have significant populations of students who may be facing such a triple threat to their language and reading development. This is even more reason to supply careful foundational instruction from the beginning for all children.

It is important to know and remember that these problems, whether they present by themselves or in combination, are *in no way* connected to intelligence. Students who present with these deficits can learn to read and can comprehend text as well as any of their peers if they are given targeted, research-based opportunities. Children must be provided the time and attention they need to develop the foundational skills essential to their early schooling.

With financially-strapped districts sometimes needing to delay identifying lagging students for additional services, it becomes imperative for early childhood teachers to have the materials and guidance to address and support these needs in a timely, efficient, and engaging way. This support must be present in the stock materials within their classrooms. Ideally, regular classroom support would be tightly coordinated with RTI and other intervention plans and materials as well, so children have an integrated and seamless experience with both the first line materials and supporting materials. Approaching these challenges with creative solutions is great work for schools and groups of primary grade teachers to engage in together.

### *Fluency*

To assure that all young readers achieve reading fluency, well-developed materials need to provide frequent and differentiated opportunities for students to practice oral reading and receive feedback. For at least the next several years of transition to CCSS, reading fluency will be an issue for many students

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<sup>2</sup> Though there is still discussion among researchers whether this is in fact one process or two, there is no disagreement that the remedy would be the same in either case.

up and down the grades since much of what is being read is the more complex text called for by the CCSS (Benjamin and Schwanenflugel, 2010). Students also need to be given the opportunity to listen to fluent reading while following along in the text and “reading in their head” (Chard, et al 2002). The emphasis on fluency instruction must include expression (prosody), as well as accuracy and a chance to develop one’s own sense of a reading rate *appropriate to the text being read*. All of this must be clearly and strongly connected to comprehension. Practicing to read fluently offers an authentic opportunity to apply a broad range of cueing systems facile readers use automatically: grapho-phonemic, semantic and syntactic clues are all taken in during the course of proficient reading. To ensure all students are getting the chance to become fluent, there need to be several more elements folded into a ‘both and’ literacy classroom. There needs to be a way for teachers to *systematically* assess fluency, the program needs to have systems for teachers to monitor those results, and it needs to provide all students with the opportunity, the time and the attention needed to become fluent. Not as an end in itself, but as a necessary precursor to independent reading success.

A strong reading foundation is the essential bedrock students need to access for themselves the world of knowledge and ideas stored in print and to find the joy and rewards available in the universe of books. By itself, it is not sufficient. Without it, though, children cannot hope to read “independently and proficiently.”

### **Comprehension.**

Comprehension, the ultimate goal of all reading instruction, grows from many of the same components as a solid foundational program: fluency, academic vocabulary, syntax, and knowledge. A comprehensive literacy program needs to address each of these. But comprehension doesn’t need to wait until students can access text for themselves. It should be part of every classroom every day from the beginning of a students’ school career until they graduate.

#### *The essential role of read aloud in the early grades*

Anchor Standard 10 requires all students to read complex text “independently and proficiently” by the end of each grade band and to demonstrate steady progress toward that in between. A rich and purposeful read aloud curriculum helps fulfill Standard 10 before students are asked to read grade level complex text on their own. Beloved books can be returned to again and again so their nuances can be explored more deeply. Teachers can read aloud to build students’ knowledge of the world beyond their scope and to help students make connections from the known to the new. There is likely no better way to draw children in to the treasures stored in the written word than through reading aloud to them as much as possible.

Read aloud can and should provide part of the social studies, arts, and science instruction. Teachers can then feel assured they are giving their students both the time they need to become solid readers and the exposure to the world of ideas needed for building sturdy foundations in the content disciplines. This will pay off even if the content being read does not rigidly adhere to the local content frameworks or standards in these areas, although it is more efficient if it does. A foundation of wide ranging knowledge helps promote the later development of specialized knowledge.

An additional benefit to building knowledge through reading aloud is that it demonstrates to students early on that they can learn from reading. The early and repeated demonstrations of rich text as a source of deep learning helps ensure teachers in all grades are fulfilling the mix of informational text to literary text (50/50) called for by the CCSS for ELA in the elementary grades. Another virtue of expanding children's exposure to informational text is the strong likelihood that more boys will discover the joys of text than has been the case when the reading range relies too heavily on narrative literature. Girls may discover or expand aptitudes for learning about processes and topics they might otherwise have remained ignorant about (Sullivan, 2004, Tyre 2009).

A wide ranging and purposeful read aloud, one that permits plenty of time for discussion and processing of the ideas encountered, brings the world into the early elementary classroom in a rich and egalitarian way. It allows all children to learn a wide array of knowledge about the artistic, historical, literary and scientific spheres while engaging them in rich academic discussions. Readings and activities should be designed to build on one another and create a coherent body of knowledge (as called for in the CCSS ELA on page 33). This will also support young students in their growing understanding of complex semantic and syntactic patterns (Adams 2011) as well as build enjoyment and comprehension.

Of particular note is the equity built into such a coherent read aloud curriculum. Jumping from topic to topic and landing briefly on each privilege children who know something about those topics from elsewhere. These children tend to be the children from more educated households. Other students often can't make much sense of the topic because they are lacking the knowledge necessary to make the new information meaningful. Systematically building knowledge for everyone, as the CCSS ELA calls for clearly on page 33, combined with this sort of deliberately crafted approach to reading aloud, helps level the playing field.

In sum, reading aloud as a mindful, planned and essential part of the curriculum is an essential component to fulfilling the Common Core State Standards. Reading to children in the early grades as well as in later grades helps build knowledge and comprehension while students are learning and practicing the foundational skills they need to know to do this for themselves. Along the way, it can develop essential academic vocabulary, cultivate comfort with more complex syntax and build knowledge: three of the building blocks essential to building capacity with comprehension.

#### *Building knowledge:*

Knowledge has long been connected to comprehension (Hirsch, 1987; Saamio et al, 1990; Hoover and Gough, 1990; Tunmer and Hoover, 1992; Gough et al, 1996; Carver, 1998, Catts et al, 2006; Hirsch, 2006). A 'both and' literacy program needs to attend carefully and systematically to the development of background knowledge in later grades as much as in earlier ones. This requirement is clearly laid out in the CCSS (ELA 33).

#### *Attending to syntax*

As noted, read alouds in K-2 should attend to complex syntax. But careful study of sentence structure shouldn't end in these grades. Teachers of English Language Learners have long known the importance

of syntax (Wong-Fillmore and Snow 2000; Bunch et al 2012). Syntax is one of the features of text most likely to cause student difficulty (Nelson *et al* 2012, ACT 2006). Attention to syntax in all grades is an essential component of a high quality literacy program. Complex sentences bear hearing or looking at multiple times in order to fully understand them. This is yet another reason why student cravings to have books read to them multiple times should be honored and even designed into instruction as a common event, and is one of the many reasons frequent close and careful reading opportunities are emphasized in discussions of the instructional shifts called for by the ELA standards.

### *Shared reading of grade-level complex text: an instructional shift*

The most unique feature of the CCSS for ELA & Literacy may be the absolute insistence that all students read and comprehend literary and informational text of grade-level complexity, including poetry, drama and narrative, history/social studies, science and technical texts, independently and proficiently (RL and RI Standard 10). Students need to demonstrate this facility by reading texts that get progressively more complex. Since Standard 10 divides text complexity into grade bands rather than stepping up complexity grade by grade, the “in-between” periods allow for “scaffolding as needed” for texts near the high ends of the bands.

No single aspect of the standards is more challenging to implement than this. Many students will need support and scaffolding for sure. But what they need first is full access to complex texts much more frequently than has been customary in most settings. This requires a major shift in practice that will be a departure from what many teachers are accustomed to, which is the practice of always giving students “just-right” texts, or leveled readers, as the core of their instructed reading. With leveled reading groups, students have been supported by differentiating the levels of text difficulty. Going forward, for much of their instructional reading time, students will need to be supported and encouraged in reading grade-level complex text (Shanahan 2012). Differentiation will primarily come in varying the supports required to allow each student access to text of grade-level complexity. Finding and applying those high quality instructional supports needs to become a major focus of CCSS aligned reading instruction.

What might such instruction and support look like? There are many answers, and more emerging each month. Small group instruction, full class instruction, many student-to-student interactions, use of all four strands of the ELA standards -- these and more should be folded into a Common Core aligned classroom. Creative teachers and curriculum providers are experimenting with a variety of models of reading instruction to support all students with complex text. Influenced by Standard One, which calls on students to “read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and make logical inferences from it,” many of these models are referred to as “close reading”. There is a list of some of those notable resources and early efforts provided in an appendix to this article. It is a resource collection that can be expanded collaboratively over time. A truly wonderful “intended consequence” of the standards is the increase in just this type of collaboration across the country.

While many approaches might yet be discovered, there are some common instructional patterns and reoccurring ingredients emerging that deserve mention. They have in common that the close attention paid to text--to author’s craft and text structure, to word choice, to the challenging vocabulary and syntax that are features of complex text--will strengthen students’ ability to handle these challenges for themselves.

One key ingredient to these approaches is that they all draw on the design of the CCSS ELA itself. There are four strands in the ELA standards: speaking and listening, language, reading and writing. The

introductory materials make it very clear that these standards are *meant* to be woven together. They represent an integrated model for literacy (CCSS, 4). Students need to discuss ideas they have encountered in print, *especially* when those ideas are complicated and come delivered via complex syntax and less common vocabulary. At times, they may need to hear text read aloud while following along and “reading in their heads,” and then to re-read it silently. They need to ask questions of the text and be directed by well-crafted questions to pay attention to the details and structures that matter. They need to sort out their beliefs about what they’ve encountered, weigh the evidence for it, and then present those ideas and that evidence in writing.

A second design feature of the standards is the constant presence of Reading Standard One and Writing Standard Nine, the big “evidence standards”. At every grade, students are asked to attend directly and closely to the text to determine what is stated explicitly in the text and what can (or cannot) be inferred. The standards demand careful and close reading and then for the reader to provide evidence from the text for assertions about it. Practicing disciplined, careful reading can and will assist all students in learning how to deal with complex text. Facile and capable students will need to slow down and apply more care and discipline to their findings about text. Weaker readers, frequently referred to as ‘struggling’ readers, will find that effort and tenacity are virtues that are rewarded when the pace is slower and the text denser. Finding and presenting an evidence base for what you believe cultivates habits of mind that will enable students to become deep and excellent readers. With the CCSS, the race is not to the swift, but to the students who take care and notice. Instructional practice and aligned materials need to shift to provide *much* more time and support for reading when the text is complex and the demand for evidence is high. Good materials should evidence careful pacing and a steady demand for textual evidence.

The design of the standards themselves can provide some, but not all, of the ingredients needed to support all students. There also is need for solid instruction and carefully designed supports that allow students to achieve the standards and experience success as a result of their hard work. Students who are not used to wrestling with challenging texts will have to be taught explicitly that striving to accomplish something worthwhile is a positive thing to do. Others may need to learn that productive effort can be a source of pleasure with reading just as it can be on the playing field or in the practice room. Students who aren’t exerting themselves at all may need to be challenged to do so or given a more demanding task. Students having lots of trouble are going to need to be bolstered by good instructional scaffolds and encouraged by supportive peers and teachers. The materials or the instructor will need to anticipate and/or diagnose the sources of difficulty. These difficulties will frequently reside in the challenging vocabulary and syntax that are the primary features of complex text that cause students difficulty (Nelson *et al* 2012). A student may lack stamina because of a lack of reading fluency. He may not be properly monitoring comprehension or not know what strategies he can use when comprehension falters. Whatever the source of difficulty, students need to be given tools and encouragement to work through the impediment and achieve success.

Good materials and good instruction will build in strategies such as multiple reads, chunking the text, and a sequence of text dependent questions that, when addressed, unpack and illuminate what the text has to offer. Materials and instruction will push students to question the author. They will highlight and address key vocabulary and focus attention on the most complex sentences, all the while incorporating and integrating reading, writing, language, speaking and listening.

The CCSS include standards for literacy in social studies, science and technical subjects and a requirement that 50 percent of what students read in elementary school and 70 percent of what they

read in high school be informational text. A ‘both and’ literacy program needs to insure that close reading and other methods to support all students in reading complex text reflect these requirements.

### **Providing a Volume of Reading while Building in More Support:**

#### *Guided Reading with Accountable Independent Reading (GRAIR)*

Students need the opportunity to read a volume of texts that engage them, at times based on individual choice, at times based on direction by the teacher. An example of the latter would be to guide reading selections to enhance connections to topics and themes being addressed in the curriculum. Both of these “selection criteria” have the added benefit of allowing students to read harder text on their own than they might otherwise due either to motivation or the ability to build on an earlier knowledge base. At times this volume may come from texts suggested by the teacher for any number of specific purposes. Regardless of the source or selection criteria, students need material they can read independently or with limited assist from their teacher or each other. Many students will relish this opportunity; others will need to be held responsible to really read during these independent times. We are suggesting the strength of the guided reading structure be brought to bear on bringing these more reluctant readers into the joy that comes from sustained reading of engaging texts.

That is important to accomplish because these opportunities are where stamina, efficacy and persistence develop, where vocabularies and knowledge bases can be rapidly expanded through contextualized exposure to lots of words, and where students learn the sheer pleasure of becoming lost in the printed world of ideas.

Students will not come to thrive as independent and capable readers unless they also get a chance to practice. Every student needs to be able to follow his own interests and read texts of his choosing. Children need to see that reading is a way to build knowledge about something being studied elsewhere in the curriculum. Sometimes, those texts will be at or even below a student’s current comfort level, but sometimes, complexity may be higher because a student becomes so invested in a topic or because she is reading with peers who can encourage and assist her (Morgan *et al* 2010).

There is an additional need teachers and students share that guided reading groups have traditionally met. That is the need for small groups of students – especially those who need it most – to have focused time with their teacher. Children needing even more support with the grade-level complex text currently being read in shared reading can get this help with their teacher during guided reading. Teachers can spend some time discussing what the group is reading independently (thus holding the group accountable for their independent reading *and* validating student choice), but then can turn as needed to strengthening the students’ comprehension of the grade-level text.

A Guided and Accountable Independent Reading (GRAIR) Block can provide the opportunity and space for all of this. Students can read texts of their choice, curricula-related texts, teacher suggested texts (or some combination of all) roughly at their current level *and* get the small group time with their teacher



and peers that will encourage them to stretch to higher levels. Those stretches can be common when students are following their own interests deeper into a subject, text type or author. Reading growth can be fast-tracked when GRAIR is coupled to the close and coached shared reading of complex text that also would be a regular part of the school day in a ‘both and’ literacy curriculum.

Learning is further reinforced, differentiated and strengthened in this GRAIR block. Students get the practice and materials they need to progress as readers moving at varied speeds. They get these opportunities with a wide variety of texts. All the texts already present in the classroom or school library can be pulled into play for GRAIR.

One important difference to highlight between GRAIR and traditional guided reading or leveled reading programs; GRAIR is *not* when most reading and writing instruction takes place; shared reading of grade-level complex text is. This distinction is vital. It means that when the teacher meets with small groups during GRAIR she can engage children in discussion of the texts they are reading, share their excitement and pleasure, and use this time for additional support with the complex text used for shared reading as needed. She can do this because she doesn’t have to worry about getting all her reading instruction done during the interaction. Many of the techniques from traditional guided reading-- response journals, book talks, questions, and author studies--can be incorporated into GRAIR. Taken together, these activities provide the “accountable” part of the independent reading program.

Another difference involves a greater emphasis on student choice. Students can read more challenging text when they are interested in the topic, genre or author and read with friends. This means texts do not have to be pegged at an *exact* level, and students are likely therefore to have a wider choice of topics, texts and authors.

GRAIR can help meet the critical need to provide a volume of engaged reading for all students, as well as offer more time and attention with complex text for those students who need it most. A truly ‘both and’ literacy program must contain all of this. Schools and groups of teachers are starting to experiment with this model and it will be interesting to follow their discoveries and innovations.

## **Conclusion**

The achievement gap persists stubbornly despite vigorous efforts to address it for over half a century by many well-intentioned, hard-working educators. Too many of those efforts have contained *some* of the essential ingredients, but not *all* of them. Positions – about which subset of ingredients is the “right” subset, which classroom structure is the proper structure, which set of materials is the most authentic – have calcified into defensive postures, and without meaning to, educators have taken to protecting turf rather than ensuring that each and every student gets the full spectrum of reading exposure and instruction. A foundation of solid reading skills that includes fluency, development of strong academic language (vocabulary and syntax), the building of stores of knowledge, cultivation of a sturdy and flexible suite of comprehension strategies, and opportunities to choose and read engaging texts alone and with others – *all* of these are essential for reading success.

Early on, we mentioned the importance of being honest about the time it would take to allow all students to read grade level complex text “independently and proficiently.” It will take a lot of time. But the time needed to do this can come in large part from bringing literacy back into the study of social studies and science and stretching reading and writing, listening and speaking across the school day, instead of confining it to a 90 minute block. The CCSS call for informational text means that reading instruction can (must) include texts from the disciplines. Allowing all children to read complex informational text will serve the dual role of enhancing their knowledge of the world and developing them into more literate individuals. Allowing all children access to a wide volume of reading opportunities, whether teacher-directed or self-selected, will grow their sense of the riches available through text and will help insure they are able to and love to read.

Working to create curricula that bring all these ingredients together in a coherent and comprehensive fashion is work well worth doing. Eliminating the great disparity in ELA capacities between students, between neighborhoods, between districts, is something few – *especially* classroom teachers – would fail to celebrate. Nor would anybody disagree that addressing and eliminating these disparities as early in a child’s school career as possible would have an enormously positive ripple effect on the remainder of a child’s education. Helping students develop into sturdy and flexible readers in elementary school may not guarantee the elimination of the achievement gap, but what a wonderful start it would be!

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- Note: Rebekah Benjamin discusses the research presented in this article in a podcast from the "Voice of Literacy": <http://www.voiceofliteracy.org/posts41784>.]*
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## Appendix A: Additional Resources

(for instructional models and resources, action research and additional provocative discussion)

*This collection is a work in progress and is not intended to be exhaustive. These are simply sources we have returned to ourselves frequently to build and push our own understanding. Where we point to specific district or state resources, it is because we've seen lively and transformative Common Core implementation work going on there. We invite additional suggestions and recommendations to increase both our own knowledge and this resource list.*

### Achieve the Core

Home site of Student Achievement Partners, founded by primary Common Core Standards authors to guide the transition to the CCSS. Resources are carefully vetted. Teachers contribute much of the content to the site through a variety of curriculum initiatives. The authors of this paper are both on the Literacy team at Student Achievement Partners. <http://www.achievethecore.org/>

### A non-freaked out approach to teaching the common core

As advertised. This is a lively, refreshing and free-ranging blog about common core implementation.

<http://www.teachingthecore.com/non-freaked-approach-common-core-01/>

### Burkins and Yaris

Jan Burkins and Kim Yaris are always thoughtful and considered (and passionate) in their approach to literacy and their focus on questions of common core implementation for teachers and their students.

<http://www.burkinsandyaris.com/blog/>

### Core Task Project

Record of an extraordinary (and powerful) grass roots implementation project in and around Reno, Nevada. High quality sifters of other resources. Always passionate and committed to delivering the Common Core Standards “unfiltered” to teachers. <http://coretaskproject.com/>

### Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey: Literacy for Life

Two university-based educators who “get” teachers and teaching in a practical way. Unusually generous in sharing their own intellectual property. <http://www.fisherandfrey.com>

### Engage New York

A large resource of videos and ideas. Storehouse for the unprecedented effort to make an Open Education Resource Common Core curriculum for ELA and math for children in Pre-K to 12. Open to all, not just NYS educators. <http://www.engageny.org/common-core-curriculum-assessments>

### Louisiana Resources for Common Core Classroom support

A rapidly developing resource bank of outlines and guidance for CCSS planning. The toolbox linked is excellent.

<http://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/classroom-support-toolbox>

### SCASS ELA (State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards)

A teaching and resource site centered on helping understand text complexity and the central role it plays.

[http://www.ccsso.org/Navigating\\_Text\\_Complexity.html](http://www.ccsso.org/Navigating_Text_Complexity.html)

### Tim Shanahan

Tim Shanahan is another university-based educator who has deep knowledge of literacy and has immersed himself in understanding and discussing the Common Core for ELA in this blog.

<http://www.shanahanonliteracy.com/>

### Vermont Writing Collaborative

A collaborative of classroom teachers who have worked together to understand what supports students need to understand what they read with enough depth and clarity to write well about it. They run courses and have published an excellent book about writing. <http://www.vermontwritingcollaborative.org/>

Appendix B: What activities might take place during GRAIR K-2?

The tables below outline examples of general activities that can be done during Guided Reading/Accountable Independent Reading (GRAIR). GRAIR time is an opportunity to support all students by incorporating activities and lessons included in the A&R and Supplemental Guides into your literacy routines. Undoubtedly, teachers will also implement a variety of other best practices, and many will be similar to literacy centers that have been successful in the past. GRAIR can be done daily or a few times per week.

<b>Small Group Instruction</b> – Targeted instruction to support:	<u>K – 2: Guided Reading</u>
Building Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preview or review content from informational text read alouds</li> <li>• Provide small group opportunities to practice speaking and listening</li> <li>• Especially helpful for EL and SPED students</li> </ul>
Syntax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use sentence strips, index cards or other methods to process long sentences from read aloud texts</li> <li>• Students can break sentences into words and phrases, count words, notice punctuation</li> </ul>
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mini-lessons to review multiple meaning words (i.e. – <b>run</b> a mile; <b>run</b> away) and word forms (i.e. – run, ran, running)</li> <li>• Using a variety of methods, review words you feel students need more help with; especially helpful for ELL students</li> </ul>
Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner reading or shared reading</li> <li>• Teacher can model proficient reading with students following along in the text, as well as provide students with specific and instant feedback when they read</li> </ul>
Foundational Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and reinforce concepts of print, letter recognition, phonemic awareness, spelling/sound patterns as needed.</li> <li>• Provide ideas for <i>targeted reinforcement or reteaching</i> as well as guidance on pacing lessons</li> <li>• RTI - implement Tier 2 interventions as specified by school or district. It will be important to consider using material introduced in class a second time to build fluency, build student confidence and give students the repeated exposure they may need for mastery. RTI should offer support and guidance to the classroom teacher and the intervention specialist around comprehensive re-teaching efforts of Skills, as would likely occur in a formal Tier 2 model.</li> </ul>
Conferencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conference with students about independent reading to check for understanding. Students need to be reminded they are <b>accountable</b> for learning while reading.</li> <li>• Formative and diagnostic assessments must be a regular part of teacher practice and not left to external scheduling or avoided.</li> </ul>

<b>Literacy Centers</b> – (including Accountable Independent Reading) designed to support:	<u>K – 2</u>	<u>Kindergarten</u>	<u>1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Grade</u>
Student Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students choose texts for <b>independent reading</b> based on interests from leveled libraries, classroom libraries, etc.</li> <li>• Student may choose texts that stretch slightly beyond their independent reading level.</li> <li>• Teachers create</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students can read leveled pre-primers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students can complete journal activities related to independent reading topics.</li> </ul>

	opportunities for Speaking & Listening activities and creative performance tasks for students.		
Building Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Book Center</i> – book baskets organized by Listening &amp; Learning topic</li> <li>• <i>Video Center</i> – Students can watch videos related to current or past topics.</li> <li>• <i>Listening Center</i>: Pre-recorded read aloud should be available so students can listen to and follow along with stories already heard in class or texts related to social studies or science content topics or other stories.</li> </ul>	<i>Drawing Center</i> - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students can draw or represent information about social studies and science topics.</li> <li>• Teachers can create activities to encourage students to demonstrate knowledge with pictures and words.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Writing Center</i> - write about content topics</li> <li>• <i>Video and Listening Centers</i> – related to science and social studies topics; include reading or writing short summaries or answering questions about videos</li> </ul>
Vocabulary & Syntax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unlimited number of vocabulary activities related to words from read aloud books</li> <li>• Examine and manipulate “juicy” sentences from big books, student read materials or books previously read alouds; for kindergarten, create rebus style sentences related to Listening &amp; Learning topics.</li> </ul>		
Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Listening Center</i> - Pre-record short passages for students to listen to and follow along</li> <li>• Refer to the Fluency Packets available on <a href="http://www.achievethecore.org">www.achievethecore.org</a> or <a href="http://www.engageNY.org">www.engageNY.org</a> for additional suggestions and passages.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Recording Center</i> – students can read aloud and record poems or short decodable texts and teacher can review later for fluency.</li> </ul>
Foundational Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Writing Center</i> – Students can practice handwriting, writing sight words, draw pictures of sight words, etc. Younger students can practice letter and number writing.</li> <li>• Use supplemental materials not yet tapped into for word work activities, or continue writing work introduced in class.</li> </ul>		