
ACHIEVE THE CORE

Core Advocate Newsletter

New Tools, Core Advocate Stories and Ways to Get Involved



Happy Holidays from Student Achievement Partners!

It's December! And you know what that means: holiday parties, special time with family, decorating, and a well-deserved break from school. All of us at Student Achievement Partners hope you have a peaceful and relaxing holiday season and that 2016 is a year full of joy for you!

When we return in January, join us for our monthly Core Advocate Webinar on Tuesday, January 19, 2016 at 7:00 pm EST, when we'll explore the Instructional Practice Suite for Mathematics. Prepare yourself by reading this month's feature story below.

Happy Holidays!

Ask the Experts Webinar



Our **December Webinar** will be an Office Hours format, where the experts from Student Achievement Partners answering your questions and those they are frequently asked. Tune in for ideas and advice from SAP's finest, and share your expertise with others in our Core Advocates network when we turn the questions to the audience! Register [here](#) and bring a friend or two!



Spring Core Advocate Conference

Core Advocates from across the country will come together in Denver for the Spring Core Advocate Conference May 14-15, 2016. Once again the conference will feature workshops, keynote speakers, and unconference sessions, plus a few new surprises! In addition to the two days of learning, a \$200 registration fee (per participant) covers travel, lodging, breakfast and lunch, making this one of the most affordable professional learning experiences for teachers in the country! Applications, available [here](#), are being accepted now through February 14, 2016. Can't wait to see you there!

Your Feedback Needed

The Math Team at Student Achievement Partners is interested in hearing about how you use the math tasks, lessons, and mini-assessments on achievethecore.org. Your feedback helps shape the tools on the website and allows SAP to better support Core Advocates and teachers across the country. Click the link below to share what you've done, and be entered in a drawing for a \$25 Amazon Gift Card! Thank you in advance from the Math Team!

[Feedback for the Math Team at SAP](#)

Share What You Know

Core Advocate Lisa Wakefield won a \$25 Amazon Gift Card for her great response to last month's question: *How do you effectively communicate with parents?* See Lisa's response and other great parent communication ideas below.

It's worth the extra time

I send parents regular updates about upcoming projects and field trips, and reminders to check their student's grade. I



also send home *Good News* cards that say something positive about their student. I love it when I get an email thanking me for the kind words, or one that says thanks for keeping us informed. It makes it worth the extra time.

-Lisa Wakefield

More great ideas

I use Class Dojo to keep parents in the loop with behavior and tasks all day. I share pictures with parents to show them what their kids are doing during the school day. It's a perfect way to keep the flow going between home and school!

-Janine Fernandez

I send out a weekly Friday email. I keep it simple, just including our main focus for the week and any updates and reminders.

-Bethany Lockhart

I contact every parent during the first two weeks of school by phone. It sets up a nice line of communication with the families. Keeping parents informed is the best way to keep them on my side!

-Michelle Butturini

This year I signed up for **Remind** - and it's been a game-changer! I send out daily homework notifications for each of my classes, and parents choose to receive the message either by text or by email. As an added bonus, the homework completion rate and preparation for tests has definitely improved over last year!

-Cay Freeman

Share your answer to this month's question to enter into the next drawing for a \$25 Amazon Gift Card.

This month's question:

Q: Where do you go to find complex texts?

Submit Your Answer

What Question Would You Ask Our Readers?

Instructional Practice Guide Suite: Mathematics

The **Common Core State Standards** (CCSS) and the corresponding **Shifts** call for a new kind of mathematics instruction. As teachers work to create math classrooms with focus, coherence, and a balance of the three aspects of rigor, they may wonder, "How should my teaching be different than it was before CCSS? What do Shifts-aligned math lessons really look like?" On **Achieve the Core**, math teachers can find a suite of tools designed to help them understand how to implement lessons and units that support student learning in math.

The Instructional Practice Guide (IPG): Lesson Planning Tool

Lesson planning is some of the most important work that teachers do. The quality of the lesson plan can be a significant factor in determining how well students learn during class time. The digital **Lesson Planning Tool** guides teachers through a series of questions to help create a lesson that is aligned to the Standards and the Shifts. A series of prompts allows the teacher to consider:

- the mathematics of the lesson
- creating coherent connections for students
- analysis of the problems and exercises students will perform during the lesson
- formative assessment strategies
- classroom discussion

Each prompt includes a *Need help?* button that provides support and resources specific to the section or prompt. This comprehensive guide will take time to do well, as each module is designed to be completed in one planning period. Note that to use the **Lesson Planning Tool** you will need an **account** with **Achieve the Core**, which is free and very easy to set up!

The Instructional Practice Guide: Coaching Tool

Many math teachers have the opportunity to be coached by a peer or by a building or district instructional coach. The conversations between a teacher and peer or coach can have a significant impact on improving instruction and student achievement. However, providing meaningful feedback can be difficult without any guidance. The **IPG: Coaching Tool** is a framework for a peer or coach to note indicators present in planning and practice which indicate alignment to the Standards and the Shifts. The math IPG: Coaching Tool focuses on three Core Actions with corresponding indicators. Core Action 1 ensures that the lesson is aligned to the Shifts. Core Action 2 references research-based instructional practices, such as strengthening all students' understanding of the content by sharing a variety of students' representations and solution methods and summarizing the mathematics with references to student work and discussion in order to reinforce the focus of the lesson. Core Action 3 allows the teacher and observer to determine the degree to which students are exhibiting the mathematical practices while engaging with the content of the lesson. The observer selects a rating for each indicator and includes evidence to support the chosen rating, although the tool is designed to spark conversation and discussion about what was observed, rather than to evaluate the lesson or the teaching. The IPG: Coaching Tool is an excellent resource for planning and PLC discussions, as well.

Teaching the Core

In conjunction with the **IPG: Coaching Tool**, the **Teaching the Core** website provides full-length classroom videos and associated lesson materials to help educators visualize

classroom implementation of the Shifts. Additionally, each video is annotated, explicitly identifying and describing the teacher and student actions and behaviors included in the IPG: Coaching Tool. The Teaching the Core videos and the IPG: Coaching Tool together provide a clear vision of Shifts-aligned instruction and the components a teacher might attend to in improving instruction for all students. The annotations makes these videos an ideal resource for those providing professional learning for teachers, or educators looking for specific, authentic examples of the indicators in action.

January Webinar

Are you interested in learning more about the Instructional Practice Guide Suite for math? The January Core Advocate Webinar will provide more information and details. Join us on Tuesday, January 19, 2016 from 7:00 - 8:00 pm EST for a detailed walk-through of the math versions of the Lesson Planning Tool, the Coaching Tool and Teaching the Core. Register today by clicking [here](#), and share the link with your colleagues. We hope to see you there!

Past Webinar Recordings

The Field Impact Team at Student Achievement Partners is happy to host a monthly Core Advocate Webinar featuring the tools and resources that support teachers in implementing the Standards and the Shifts in their classrooms. Mark your calendars and join us on the third Tuesday of each month (unless otherwise indicated) from 7:00 - 8:00 pm EST. Register for the December webinar Ask the Experts Office Hours [here](#), and access recordings of our previous webinars by clicking the links below.

November Webinar: [The Suite of Instructional Tools for ELA](#)

October Webinar: [The Coherence Map](#)

September Webinar: [The Knowledge and Practice Survey](#)

August Webinar: [The Matthew Effect](#)

July Webinar: [Are Fractions Numbers and Why Does it Matter?](#)

Network News

Core Advocates in Action:

Core Advocate Peter Sipe is leading a project with his students that shows an innovative way to integrate nonfiction text into the classroom. Each week his students read an obituary. While it may sound a bit unorthodox, the students have embraced it. Peter explains that reading obituaries is a great way to learn about historical figures (big and small) while simultaneously learning about the historical context in which each person lived and new vocabulary. Check out [the website](#) to see if this is a project you'd like to try in your own classroom.

Upcoming Events:

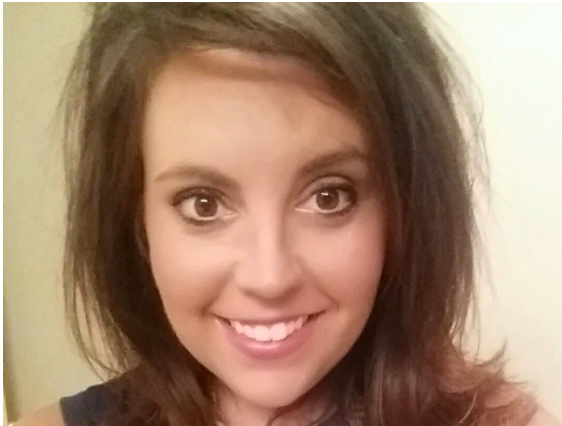
Washington State Catalysts Convening - January 9-10, Seattle, WA

Volusia County Schools *Classrooms Connect to Achieve the Shifts* - January 15-16,

Deltona, FL
Teach for America 25th Anniversary Summit - February 5-7, Washington, DC
Arizona State Catalysts Convening - February 20-21, Phoenix, AZ
Core Advocate State Captains Retreat - February 27-28, Philadelphia, PA
New Jersey State Catalysts Convening - March 5-6, TBD
North Carolina State Catalysts Convening - April 22-23, TBD
Core Advocate Conference - May 14-15, Denver, CO

A Core Advocate's Voice

*In the essay below, Core Advocate Brooke Powers reflects on her participation in the KY State Catalyst Convening December 5-6 in Louisville. Share **your** Core Advocate story using the link below.*



"It is time to stop looking at Common Core as about politics, money, schools or teachers and start realizing it is about learners. Our students deserve better. "

Until last Saturday, I thought I was pretty successful at teaching the Common Core Math Standards. I have written numerous blog posts about how Common Core has transformed my classroom into a stronger learning environment for all learners, praised its effects on learning to parents, and have been a champion in my district for its implementation. After having the opportunity to attend the Core Advocates weekend put on by the Student Achievement Partners, it is safe to say that I now realize I have just begun to tap the potential of the Common Core's power.

In many ways, it is humbling to walk into a room with some of the most inspiring teachers in Kentucky and national Achieve the Core leaders; however, there wasn't much time to stand in awe as we had our learning cut out for us over the course of the next two

days. The big idea of the weekend was examining the Shifts in the Common Core Standards, specifically Focus, Coherence, and Rigor. Each of these pieces provided me with another lens through which to view the Standards that would enable me to be a better and more effective teacher leader.

Without a doubt the Focus aspect blew me away. I have read the standards that represent the Major Work of the Grade repeatedly, but somehow never connected the fact that 75-80% of teacher time was supposed to be spent on these Major Work standards. For example, in Kentucky's 7th grade math unit, we only dedicate 60% of the time to these focus standards as we have divided the time up equally among the five domains. Furthermore, our state test is modeled in the same manner with 40% of our assessment covering the content standards we are only supposed to spend 20% of the time covering.

I have been as guilty as the next person of pointing my finger at prior grade levels and lamenting that "if only they had done a better job teaching Common Core I could be more successful". The Core Advocates convening showed me that the beauty of the Core comes in the coherence it achieves. No matter what happened previously the Standards always give teachers a chance to wrap that content and bring it right back around to where you need students to be. We had the opportunity to work with teachers from numerous grade levels to see the innumerable connections that were woven into Common Core. From as early as Kindergarten children are on the pathway to success in Algebra and it is our job as teachers to keep weaving those connections in for student success.

As a seventh grade teacher I have complained for four years about how disjointed the 7th grade math standards are. I felt like a complete Common Core novice after working through the coherence piece with my state colleagues. Absolutely every standard K-8 is intentional, is linked, and is necessary exactly where it is placed. Those disjointed 7th grade standards I once complained about are actually perfectly aligned. The geometry standards link right back into all three focus units while the probability standards can be directly related to the number system standards. It would be impossible for me to ever look at the standards the same way again after seeing the intentionality that was placed in writing each one.

The Rigor piece is definitely where I was in my comfort zone since Rigor (as defined in the Common Core) has been my passion since I started implementing Common Core in my classroom. It was still so very valuable to have meaningful conversations with other teachers about the true meaning of Rigor. No, it isn't harder worksheets or more work but instead equal focus on concepts, skills, and application. No one piece of the three is any more valuable than the other and all three must be present to truly achieve any of the Common Core standards.

Here's my big takeaway from the weekend: it is time to start working with each other to put the Common Core back together. We have spent four years deconstructing,

replacing, clarifying and blaming; now, we have to go back, reconstruct, and start looking at the big picture. It is time to stop pointing our fingers and blaming the Core or the content that came before us and start seeing the beauty in the coherence of the Core and the ability to constantly wrap the content around for learners. It is time to stop looking at Common Core as about politics, money, schools or teachers and start realizing it is about learners. Our students deserve better. Our students deserve the Common Core how it was originally envisioned, not just as a deconstructed check list of skills.

-Brooke Powers

Share Your Work

Resources for Your Classroom

IMET Professional Learning Modules: For those of you preparing to do a review of instructional materials in your school or district, be sure to check out the **Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool**(IMET)on **Achieve the Core** as well as the Professional Learning Modules that support a review team in using the IMET. These new modules will help prepare your review team and train them in understanding the IMET for math and for ELA/Literacy. Additional modules which support teams during the review process will be made available in the spring.

Adapting Materials Project: Have you seen the new **Supplementing and Adapting section of the *Aligned* blog**? Achieve the Core's blog ***Aligned*** covers issues related to instructional materials and now has a new section devoted entirely to posts about how you can improve the materials you have in your classroom right now. From tools that help you pinpoint exactly where your math textbook needs improvement, to advice about how to navigate the world of free, OER resources, you'll find timely information **here**. Be sure **to subscribe** to receive updates or **email us** if you know of topics you'd like to see covered in an upcoming post, and check out **this post** highlighting the outcomes of a recent multi-district adapting materials project.

Tools for Being Talked About: Looking for a good tool for lesson planning? How about new resources to integrate into math or ELA/literacy lessons? What about PD resources to support teacher development? This comprehensive list compiled by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation provides a **snapshot of tools** being used by teachers, school systems, and school leaders. Organized by primary purpose, it's easy to skip straight to tools that you need now! This list is a **great reference document** to print and share with colleagues.

Upcoming Opportunities

Monthly Core Advocate Webinars: Join Core Advocates from across the country for a monthly learning opportunity, taking place on the third Tuesday of each month from 7:00-8:00 pm EST. December's webinar is an Office Hours format where you can 'Ask the Experts.' **Submit your questions** regarding the Standards, the Shifts, classroom practice, SAP's tools and resources, or other topics burning in your minds, then join us for a question and answer session on Tuesday, December 15. Register [here](#), and be sure to share the registration link with friends and colleagues.

Good to Great: The New Teacher Project (**TNTP**) is taking New Orleans by storm this summer! The Good to Great Institute is an intensive summer experience that prepares teachers to rise to the challenge of the Common Core State Standards in ELA and math by working with highly successful experienced teachers, content-specific training, collaboration with peers, and practice teaching students. TNTP is looking for experienced teachers to lead this work, and provides a competitive salary and travel expenses. Email [Valerie Barron](#) at TNTP for more information about the application process.

Social Media Spotlight

What Makes a Text Complex?

- Meaning
 - Layers of meaning
 - Purpose
 - Concept complexity
- Structure
 - Text features
 - Genre
 - Organization
- Knowledge
 - Content knowledge
 - Disciplinary knowledge
 - Intertextuality
 - Background & experiences
- Language
 - Vocabulary
 - Sentence length and structure
 - Figurative language
 - Regional/historical usage (dialects)



Natalie Franzi @NatalieFranzi · Dec 5

What Makes a Text Complex? #CCSS #coreadvocates



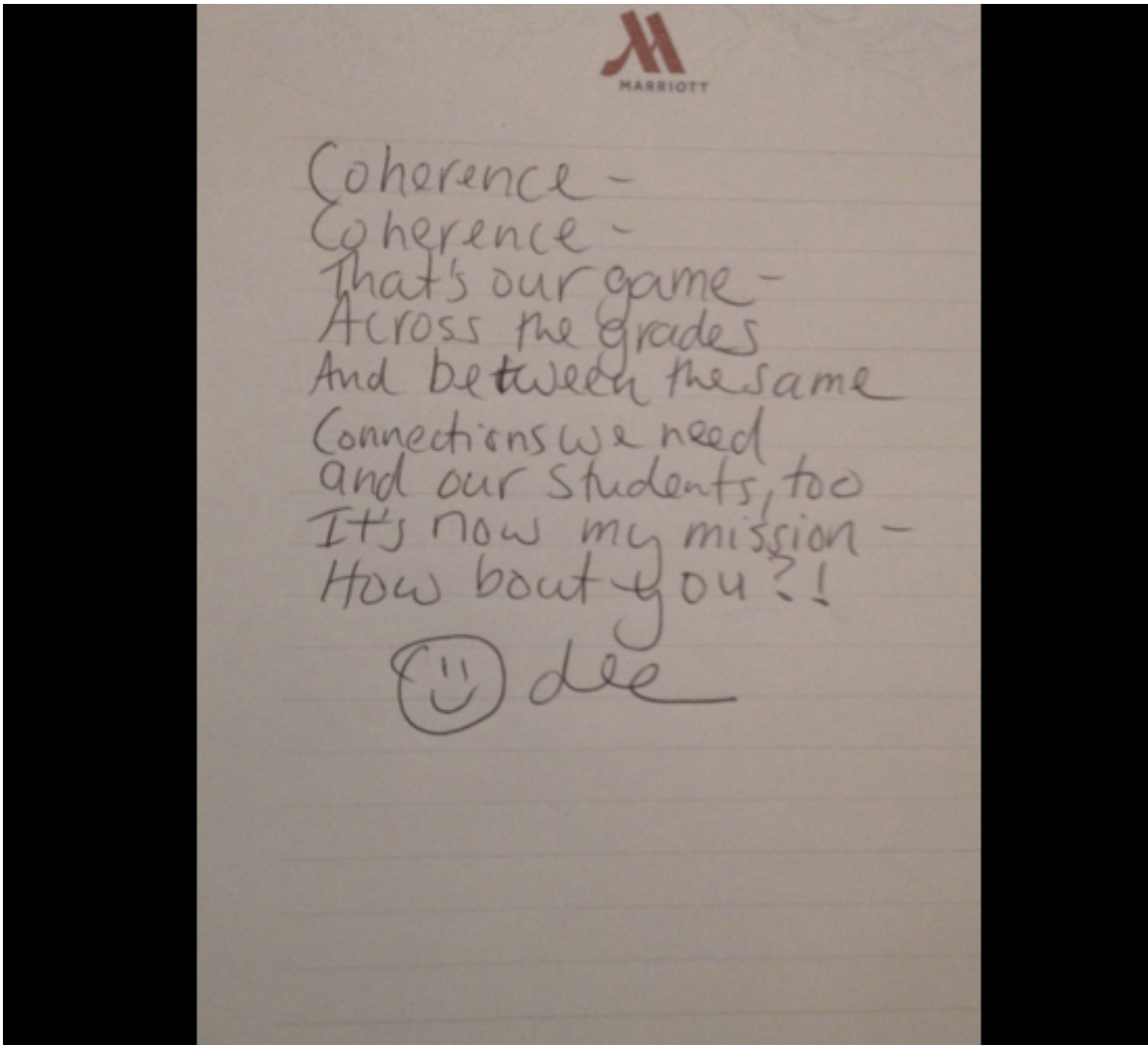
Crystal Barrick and 6 others follow



Veeko Lucas @veekolucas · Dec 5

Rich discussions, collaboration and a few laughs to mix it up, I'd say Day 1 of the Kentucky convening was a success! #coreadvocates





Dee Crescitelli @dcrescitelli · Dec 6

I decided we needed a cheer! [#coherence](#) [#coreadvocates](#) [@JoanieFun](#) Shenanigans I know...but the best kind!



Amy Spies and 1 other Retweeted



Jody Guarino @jody_guarino · Nov 17

Can't wait to watch Teaching the Core clips and learn w [@lockhartedu](#) [@mymathsoul](#) [#coreadvocates](#)





William Baylis @BaylisWilliam · Nov 15

The bell cannot be "unrung"! Lots of work to do after an amazing conference!
Understanding the shifts #coreadvocates



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