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# Introduction

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The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a set of standards developed by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). These standards were developed due to a perceived need by members of these associations for a set of consistent learning goals that would be common for all students across states. The CCSS are divided into two sets: English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. These standards were developed for a general student population and did not take into consideration the demands they would present for specific populations, including special education students and English language learners (ELLs). The CCSS for ELA (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a), in particular, present challenges for teachers who have ELLs in their classrooms due to the CCSS demands for engaging in discussions, expressing ideas clearly and fluently, reading and writing complex texts, and using language at an advanced level.

The challenges of the CCSS for ELA and the lack of guidance for teachers offer an opportunity for considering how to best address the needs of ELLs in the CCSS era. All teachers, including mainstream content-area teachers and ESL and bilingual specialists, can create relevant units that target the development of both content knowledge and language skills of ELLs. This volume was designed to deepen teachers' knowledge and provide instructional approaches and practices for supporting sixth-grade through twelfth-grade ELLs to meet the ambitious expectations of the CCSS for ELA. The chapters in this volume provide concrete ideas for engaging ELLs in a range of intellectually rich tasks to simultaneously develop content knowledge and academic English.

The second chapter, by Bunch, Walqui, and Kibler, discusses meeting the Standards' demands of the use of academic language through structured learning activities with rigorous instruction in well-scaffolded units. Using a seventh-grade ELA unit as a framework, this chapter highlights a variety of pedagogical practices that actively support ELLs and develop academic language and literacy resources, focusing on the challenges these students face. An example is provided in this chapter to illustrate how three levels of scaffolding (macro, meso, and micro) can help students be successful at a task while developing future skills. The authors provide approaches that directly address their students' developing language needs in respect to the specific demands of the CCSS through scaffolding that will build general language skills as well as academic language.

Chapter 3, by Fisher and Frey, addresses how teachers can approach the CCSS's focus on students' independent comprehension of complex texts. The pedagogical practice of close reading is featured in this chapter as a means of deepening comprehension and encouraging independent reading of complex texts. Fisher and Frey build off of the model of determining text complexity provided by the CCSS and temper it with considerations needed for ELLs; their methods are used throughout an ELA unit to provide evolving opportunities for ELLs and to develop language that leads to learner autonomy. This is further illustrated through a qualitative text analysis of *Out of the Dust* (Hesse, 1997) that models the teaching points that should occur during a close reading lesson. Fisher and Frey close by further highlighting the importance of conducting close reading to develop academic language for ELLs to develop independence and deeper comprehension of complex texts.

The fourth chapter, by MacDonald and Molle, explains six key CCSS for ELA practices that intersect with the specific demands for ELLs. Embracing the perspective of *language as action*, the authors provide guiding questions that educators can use to develop activities to engage ELLs in academic language use within the classroom. An eighth-grade classroom example is provided to illustrate how these guiding questions can be utilized to address each of the CCSS for ELA key practices. Based on this example, this chapter provides a blueprint for practitioners to support ELLs' meaningful engagement of academic language.

In Chapter 5, Cooper highlights how social justice, a critical mission often in the background of pedagogy, can move to the foreground of instruction for ELLs. Drawing on the writings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Cooper provides text analysis and scaffolded writing exercises that integrate social justice themes with learning literacy. She shares a variety of strategies for supporting ELLs at different levels, from sentence frames to word frequency analysis. At a broader level, Cooper charges teachers to support ELLs' developing understanding of social justice by situating their understanding of texts in a sociocultural context that recognizes the struggles of groups historically oppressed and marginalized. Cooper concludes by highlighting other texts from the CCSS Appendix B (NGA & CCSSO, 2010b) that could be used to support social justice education for ELLs.

Chapter 6, by de Oliveira, Klassen, and Maune, introduces a pedagogical practice called the teaching-learning cycle (TLC) that links reading and writing through a focus on language. The TLC primarily addresses CCSS Language Standard 3, which concerns students' ability to know about language and to understand how and when to use certain kinds of language. With a focus on language support, the TLC scaffolds ELLs' reading and writing development by providing supports

like detailed reading, similar to Fisher and Frey's close reading, that involve teachers guiding students to make explicit connections between language features and the functions they serve in a text. This guidance carries through to the writing component of the TLC, where students receive support through collaborative writing practices that give students a common experience of writing in new genres. The authors show how the principle of "guidance through interaction in the context of shared experience" (Martin & Rose, 2005, p. 252) can support ELLs as they make connections from reading to writing.

Peercy, Artzi, Silverman, and Martin-Beltrán continue to address the high demands of the CCSS in Chapter 7, focusing on supporting ELLs learning to read. They share a reading program called Reading Buddies that involves cross-age reading instruction and peer support. Through a variety of material, linguistic, and social supports, the authors show how younger ELLs can develop literacy through interaction and structured conversation with an older peer. In particular, the authors emphasize how ELLs can grow their vocabulary through explicit instruction delivered in conversation with their reading buddy. Peercy et al. thus provide teachers with valuable ELL-focused strategies for addressing critical vocabulary and reading comprehension concepts in the CCSS.

In Chapter 8, Villagomez, Wenger, and Ernst-Slavit focus on CCSS Standards 6 and 9, which are concerned with technology and research in the writing process. They describe a blogging pedagogy that emphasizes social justice by giving students access to writing technologies and expanding their repertoire of academic language. As the students blog, responding to literature in their ELA class, the teacher differentiates instructional feedback to support the needs of ELLs. For example, the authors show how sentence starters can help ELLs frame their contributions academically, expanding their linguistic resources for academic register. Throughout the chapter, Villagomez, Wenger, and Ernst-Slavit show how blogging provides authentic opportunities for ELLs to gain access to writing technologies and practice their developing skills of writing academically.

Several themes weave these chapters together. One is that attention to complex texts is a key aspect of ELA instruction for ELLs. ELLs need to engage meaningfully with complex texts to develop their language and literacy skills. Developing academic language within classroom contexts is another key theme for ELLs to be successful in schools. These two themes are interconnected throughout the volume. In order for ELLs to learn academic language, they must learn it in the context of intellectually engaging tasks that enable them to read complex texts.

Another critical theme is independent comprehension and learner autonomy. These are achieved through specific pedagogical practices that involve scaffolding, close reading, and meaningful language usage. Second language learning is optimal when attention to specific aspects of language such as vocabulary, syntax, text structure, and organization leads to reflection about how language works, with students moving from teacher-supported tasks to more independent tasks.

The chapters in this volume provide ideas for teachers to meet the high expectations of the CCSS for ELA. We hope this book, along with the other books in this series, offer teachers opportunities to engage in deep conversations about what best practices support ELLs in their classrooms and beyond.

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