



Collaborating for Success With the Common Core

By Kim Bailey, Chris Jakicic, Jeanne Spiller (Solution Tree Press, 2014)

S.O.S. (A Summary of the Summary)

The main ideas of the book are:

- ~ Having teachers work in *collaborative teams* will ensure a more successful transition to the Common Core.
- ~ The CCSS leave much to the practitioners. This book helps educators understand, plan, pace, assess, and teach the standards.

Why I chose this book:

There are so many materials out there on the Common Core. I found this book to be a very thoughtful approach to the CCSS that gets back to the *intent* of the standards and reminds us all why we got into this profession to begin with! I think it's a more humane approach to suggest that *teams* of teachers, not individual teachers, should be tackling the standards. At the same, this is also the more *effective* approach because if individual teachers interpret the standards differently, then we're not going to provide our students with one clear set of high standards that the CCSS set out to provide.

This book covers a lot of big topics – from powering the standards to unwrapping them. Pick and choose just one or two for your school to attack this year. Good luck!

The Scoop (In this summary you will learn...)

- √ How to “power” the standards – choose the ones teachers will prioritize so everyone is on the same page.
- √ How to break down each standard into the skills and knowledge students must learn so that your teachers interpret and apply the standards in the same way.
- √ The importance of creating CCSS pacing guides for teams of teachers.
- √ How to insure teacher assessments match the rigor of the CCSS.
- √ Three important implications for instructional strategies given the new demands and emphases of the CCSS.
- √ How to respond when students don't meet the more rigorous demands of the CCSS.
- √ Professional development ideas to introduce your teachers to the ideas in this book.

Chapter 1 – Understanding the Common Core State Standards

There is no doubt that the changes in education due to the new Common Core State Standards are large and the stakes are high. States, districts, and schools are each taking their own approach to helping teachers figure out *what* to teach and *when* to teach it. In addition, educators are being bombarded by emails, articles, workshops, and textbook publishers claiming that they have “the next best thing” to help them teach the CCSS. However, much of this information is inconsistent. Furthermore, change will not occur overnight. With the types of changes the CCSS are calling for, educators need guidance, ongoing support, and much more than one-day workshops. Furthermore, we need a *systematic* approach since the only way our students will meet the new standards is if a *significant* portion of our teachers adopt the new initiatives. Research has shown the power of using *collaborative teams* within a professional learning community to provide the type of ongoing support and guidance needed to address these overwhelming changes. The authors strongly urge schools to rely on the use of collaborative teams for a successful implementation of the CCSS.

The first big hurdle is to provide students with a curriculum to help them meet the new standards. Collaborative teams, by using the guidelines set out by Richard DuFour and colleagues, aim to address the following curricular questions:

1. What do we want our students to learn?
2. How will we know if our students are learning?
3. How will we respond when some students don't learn?
4. How will we extend and enrich the learning for students who are already proficient?

These questions, familiar to those already working in collaborative teams, are perfectly suited to addressing the CCSS. With the addition of one extra question, these questions will help teams reexamine student learning in light of the CCSS. In addition to the four above, the authors suggest adding one more question to help educators think of the instructional practices that will best help students acquire the new skills and knowledge required in the CCSS. We will call this additional question 2.5:

- 2.5 What effective practices will lead to student learning of essential skills and concepts?

These five questions will be addressed in the chapters throughout the rest of the book. For those newer to the ideas of collaborative teams working within a professional learning community, there is a list of resources starting on p.16 of the book (you can also read The Main Idea's summary of *Learning by Doing* by DuFour, et al.) The authors are convinced that both the *structure* and the *mindset* of collaborative teams is what will truly bring a school forward with the CCSS. First, collaborating with a team will help teachers deal with the overwhelming nature of the shifts expected. Second, the structure of a collaborative team is set up to address the curriculum and assessments that will be necessary for students to meet the new standards.

Understanding the Common Core State Standards

The first task is to help teachers understand the content of the standards and the shifts they must make. Most schools and school districts have already begun this process and understand that there is an emphasis on problem solving, relevance, application, the integration of multiple skills, and high-level literacy. This chapter explains the *structure* of the standards. If you believe your teachers need a better grasp of the following key terms which are crucial to an understanding of the organization of the CCSS, pages 13-15 provide an explanation of each one:

ELA/Literacy CCSS: *Strands, anchor standards, domains, grade-specific standards, and grade bands*

Mathematics CCSS: *Mathematical Practices, standards, clusters, domains, critical areas, and conceptual concepts*

Help Teachers Become More Familiar with the CCSS

Below are four suggestions for ways teams can deepen their understanding of the standards:

(1) *Vertical Standards Walks:* This is a way for a team with teachers from different grades to explore the standards. For ELA/literacy, the team can do a *strand walk*, that is look at one of the strands (Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, or Language) for the grades the team represents. In math, the team can do a *domain walk* and explore one of the domains (such as Operations and Algebraic Thinking) for the range of grades on the team. Then for either group, post the standards on the wall and have everyone use sticky notes to jot down changes they notice from grade to grade (pay attention to the *verbs* used) and implications for rigor and assessment.

(2) *End-in-Mind Exploration* – As a school or team, discuss the anchor standards (ELA) or the Mathematical Practices (math). Discuss your grade's role in accomplishing these *end-in-mind* skills and why these are important for college and career readiness.

(3) *Assessment Exploration* – Examine the sample questions from the two consortia (PARCC and SBAC) that are working to create K-12 CCSS-aligned assessments by 2014-15. This will awaken anyone who didn't think the CCSS would require much change. Your team might discuss: *How does the level of these questions compare to those from previous state assessments? What challenges might our students face? What are the implications for instruction and assessment in our grade/discipline?*

(4) *Scavenger Hunts* – The book contains two scavenger hunts – sets of questions – teams can use to further their dialogue. Below is an excerpt of a scavenger hunt for math (you can find both hunts on p.17 and p.18 of the book):

Scavenger Hunt for a Mathematics Team

Standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a standard? How many standards are in your grade level? • Which one is new at your grade level? • Which one is no longer taught? 	Clusters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a cluster? • Which domain in your grade level has the most/fewest clusters?
Domains <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a domain? What are the domains for your grade? • Which domains in the grade level before/after yours are the same/different? • Pick one domain in your grade level. What will students know in this domain when they come to your grade level? 	Terminology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the Standards for Mathematical Practice? How are they connected to the Standards for Mathematical Content? • What are <i>critical areas</i> and what are these areas for your grade? • What is a grade band? A conceptual category?

Chapter 2 – Major Shifts in the CCSS and How to Support Change

Major Shifts in the CCSS

We keep hearing about the types of changes in education that are needed to prepare students for the 21st century. However, we've *already lived* through more than 10 percent of the 21st century! We need to make those changes now. All teachers need to do is circle the *verbs* in the CCSS and compare these to the verbs in their old standards to see that there is a substantial change in the rigor expected. Below are 7 shifts in ELA/literacy and 4 shifts in mathematics that will be needed to help students meet the new standards. Each has important implications for teaching, learning, and assessment.

Changes in Expectations in the CCSS for ELA/Literacy

- 1. Text complexity:** Clearly the CCSS ask students to read more rigorous texts. Appendix B has a list of examples of texts. This will require that teachers have *time* to not only learn about text complexity, but to gather new texts to meet these new expectations.
- 2. Informational text:** There is a new emphasis on informational texts in the CCSS. In 4th grade 50% of reading should be information, by 8th grade this reaches 55%, and by 12th grade students should be reading informational texts 70% of the time. Teachers will need time to work with colleagues in different disciplines to insure that students meet this requirement.
- 3. Interdisciplinary literacy:** Because science, history, social studies, and technical subjects will *also* have to incorporate ELA standards, those teachers will need to know how to address literacy standards as well.
- 4. Close reading:** In the past teachers have prepared students before they read a text. Now students will need to do more independent reading. Further, students will need to delve into the text for evidence rather than personal connections. Teachers may need training to learn how to explicitly teach their students to do close reading.
- 5. Text analysis:** Connected to **close reading**, **text analysis** requires that students support their ideas with specific examples and facts from the text.
- 6. Argumentative writing:** Like the shift away from personal responses to reading, students will need to make a shift away from personal opinion and instead rely on facts and sound arguments. This is a shift from an emotional to a more logical approach to writing. Teachers will need time to find samples of this type of writing to share with students. (Appendix C has some samples.)
- 7. Academic vocabulary and language:** The CCSS clearly highlight the importance of explicitly teaching vocabulary.

Changes in Expectations in the CCSS for Mathematics

- 1. Fewer but more focused standards:** Students are expected to master fewer standards so they have time to develop a deep understanding. Previously, students often only followed a series of steps to solve a problem without understanding *why*. Now students must be able to explain what they are doing and why. Teachers may need professional development or coaching to adapt their instruction to focus on teaching conceptual understanding rather than simply teaching algorithms.
- 2. Habits of mind:** As outlined in the Standards for Mathematical Practice, students need to develop 6 behaviors to help them think like mathematicians: persevering, reasoning, forming arguments, modeling, communicating precisely, and using structure.
- 3. Progression of skills and concepts:** Teachers will need to understand how the CCSS lay out a progression, from grade to grade, of the mathematical concepts to teach. The CCSS provide coherence so students can build on what they have learned previously.
- 4. Procedural fluency:** Expectations for fluency – calculating with speed and accuracy – start as early as kindergarten.

How to Support Change in Your School

Because the implications for change go well beyond the *content* teachers must teach – to the instructional strategies and changes in pacing to the means of assessment – leaders must be thoughtful in how they approach this change. To begin, leaders must help teachers understand *why* we are making this change. When they understand that this new approach will better prepare students for their future, and when they see that the changes in their teaching practice lead to deeper learning rather than filling in the bubbles – they will be reminded that their work is important and valuable.

However, many principals do not view the introduction of the CCSS as a *change* process. They need to understand that this may be the most significant change they oversee in their careers. As such, they should follow the steps of any change process – help teachers understand *why*, build a team with the right people to lead the initiative, communicate a vision of how the change will occur and what the new expectations will be (including what the CCSS will *look like* in practice), empower teachers so they don't feel this is something being *done to* them, and finally, find ways to celebrate small wins.

Chapter 3 – Powering the CCSS

The Importance of Powering the Standards

In order to ensure that everyone is on the same page, teams ask the question, “What do we want our students to learn?” Many will feel satisfied in responding with, “The Common Core State Standards.” However, this does not guarantee consistency across classrooms because each teacher will interpret and apply the standards in a different way. Furthermore, there are far too many standards to teach all of them thoroughly. For example, for ELA in grade 6 there are *69 standards*: 19 standards in the Reading strand, 24 in Writing, 9 in Speaking and Listening, and 17 in the Language strand. There isn’t enough time to address each of these thoroughly, but if we leave teachers independently to decide which ones they will emphasize, students are going to be prepared *differently*. For example, one third-grade teacher might focus on mastering the multiplication tables while another might focus on problem solving with multiplication. For this reason, *teams* of teachers need to work together to decide which standards to emphasize. Identifying “power standards” is a challenging opportunity for teachers to discuss their personal philosophies about what students should know and be able to do and then build consensus about what is most important.

What Powering *Is* and *Isn't*

Simply put, powering is *not* about deciding which standards to teach and which not to teach. You may need to repeatedly emphasize to your teachers that they must teach *all* of the standards. However, the powering process helps teachers discuss the relative importance of the standards, choose the standards to go into greater depth with, and ensure that what students are learning does *not* depend on which teachers they have.

The 4-Step Powering Process

Before powering the standards – identifying the most important ones -- it is crucial to be clear about whether a district-based team or school-based teams will be responsible for powering the standards. Furthermore, before jumping into powering the standards, those involved must first be *familiar* with the standards (see the shifts and suggestions for getting to know the standards in the previous two chapters) as well as the assessments (from PARCC and SBAC).

Step One: Identify Potential Power Standards Based on Three Criteria – First have teachers *independently* decide which standards they believe to be the most important. Give them 20 minutes or they will find *all* standards important! They should choose standards that meet at least one of the criteria that Douglas Reeves developed for choosing power standards:

1. **Endurance** – A standard that will be important over a lifetime – like understanding place value.
2. **Leverage** – A standard with cross-curricular implications – like unit rate because it is also taught in science classes.
3. **Readiness for the next level** – A standard that is necessary to prepare students for the next level of learning.

Step Two: Develop a First Draft – The goal of this step is to have the team build consensus around a shortened list of power standards. Everyone will agree to include certain standards and exclude others – that’s the easy part. The interesting and useful part of this step will be coming to consensus around the grayer standards. To get to agreement, the team can use this reasonable definition of *consensus*: (1) all points of view have been heard and (2) the will of the group is clear, even to those who oppose it. Leaders must insure that the voice of everyone on the team is heard.

Step Three: Determine Alignment Between Draft One and Other Relevant Documentation – The team should then make sure their list of power standards aligns with essential documents – released assessment materials from SBAC and PARCC as well as CCSS clarifying documents and the school’s curricular materials. For example, the assessment consortia emphasize the importance of the first Reading anchor standard (close reading) and in math they have determined that some clusters need more emphasis and have therefore categorized the clusters as *major*, *supporting*, and *additional*.

Step Four: Review for Vertical Alignment – In the last step, each team should display its power standards and all teams should walk the room to have discussions about each team’s rationale. This is a time to look for redundancies or the need to add standards.

Chapter 4 – Unwrapping the CCSS

Rationale for Unwrapping the CCSS

In addition to powering the standards, unwrapping the standards is another powerful way for schools to clarify exactly what it is they want students to learn. Unwrapping the standards is a process of breaking down each standard into the concrete knowledge and skills students need to learn. This is an important step because the standards do not always *explicitly* outline all the skills and knowledge necessary to attain the standard. When teachers do this on their own, they each have different interpretations of how to apply the standards. However, when unwrapping is done as a *team*, it helps to ensure that students will develop the same skills and understandings regardless of which teacher they have. It allows teams to achieve both *clarity* and *agreement* on the specific learning targets for each standard. *Learning targets* are the *knows*, *understands*, and *able to dos* that a student must be able to demonstrate.

For example, below is a fifth-grade standard in the Reading Standards for Informational Text:

Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

Because this is not a standard that students will master at once, it helps to unwrap the standard and identify the smaller bite-sized skills and concepts (the smaller learning targets) that students will need to learn. For example, students must be able to:

- Read the informational text (depicting historical, scientific, or technical information).
- Identify the key details that inform the reader of important events, ideas, concepts, or processes.
- Analyze the relationships between multiple events, ideas, concepts, or processes.
- Synthesize the connections between the concepts and communicate the influences, relationships, and links among key events, ideas, concepts, or processes.

The Process for Unwrapping the CCSS

How do teams unwrap the standards? Below is a six-step process teams can use to huddle around a standard and dig deeply to uncover the specific learning targets that are both written and unwritten in the standard.

Step One: Choose a Must-Know Standard -- This was addressed in the last chapter about identifying the most important “power” standards. You can also start with the standards contained in your first unit or the standards that have been the most challenging. As an example, we will walk through the steps with this fourth-grade language arts example:

Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic; describe the differences in focus and the information provided.

Step Two: Highlight Key Terms and Information – Nouns and verbs are key in helping to identify the specific learning targets. You can underline the nouns and circle the verbs (here they are italicized). See the example in the Unwrapping a Standard template below.

Step Three: Discuss any Context, Conditions, or Performance Criteria – The CCSS are different from many previous sets of standards in that they provide a *context* for many of the standards. The next step is to [bracket] the context like the example below. After bracketing the context, discuss with the team what this context means.

Step Four: Identify Learning Targets – The verbs in the standard point to the *skills*. Next, the team should look at the verbs and ask, “What do we want students to do?” Then they should look at the nouns – which point to the *knowledge* – and ask, “What do students need to know?” Note that not all learning targets are “right there” in the standard. Some are *implied*. For example, nowhere in the standard above does it state that students must know the *source* of the first and secondhand information, but it may become clear that this is important in discussing the true *intent* of the standard with a team. It helps to graphically display this information. Teachers can use a template like the one below (this and other sample templates are in the appendix of the book):

Unwrapping a Standard

Standard to address: *Compare and contrast a [firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic;] describe the differences in focus and the information provided.*

Learning Targets

- Knowledge** students must know:
- Know the source of information in a firsthand and secondhand account. **(DOK1)**
 - Know what is meant by “compare” and “contrast.” **(DOK2)**
 - Know how a passage of text can have a “focus.” **(DOK2)**
 - Discuss the implications for bias/accuracy depending on the source of the information. **(DOK3)**
- Skills** students will do:
- Recognize the source of a text as either firsthand or secondhand. **(DOK1)**
 - Analyze each text to identify specific information that supports its focus. **(DOK2)**
 - Compare and contrast the firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic. **(DOK2)**
 - Describe the difference of information between the two texts. **(DOK3)**
 - Describe the differences in focus between the two texts. **(DOK3)**
 - Relate the differences in focus to the difference sources (for ex. was the firsthand account more biased?) **(DOK3)**

Vocabulary: firsthand, secondhand, account, focus, compare, contrast and (implied vocabulary) bias and source

Step Five: Determine the Rigor of Each Learning Target – In this step, teams determine the rigor of each learning target by looking at the *verbs*. There are many models to help educators understand rigor, but below are three of the most popular. See the **DOK** levels in the chart above. By examining the rigor of each standard, the team can stay attuned to the original *intent* of the standard and insure that they’re aligning their instruction and assessment with it. (Note there is a more detailed reproducible of the chart below on p.193.)

3 Models to Examine the Rigor of Each Standard

Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy	Marzano and Kendall’s New Taxonomy	Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK)
Remember (recall, identify) Understand (interpret, explain)	Level One: Retrieval (recognize, recall, use)	Level One: Recall (DOK1) (define, identify, calculate, list)
Apply (execute, implement, carry out)	Level Two: Comprehension (integrate, depict)	Level Two: Skills and Concepts (DOK2) (infer, estimate, compare, organize)
Analyze (organize, compare, differentiate)	Level Three: Analysis (match, classify, generalize, analyze errors, judge, deduce)	Level Three: Strategic Thinking (DOK3) (revise, compare, hypothesize, cite evidence)
Evaluate (judge, critique) Create (generate, plan, produce)	Level Four: Knowledge Utilization (decide, problem solve, experiment, investigate)	Level Four: Extended Thinking (DOK4) (design, connect, apply, critique, analyze)

Step Six: Identify Academic and Domain-Specific Language – If teams identify the key vocabulary associated with a standard, then teachers will be more likely to make sure that students learn those words. Look at the vocabulary words in the “Unwrapping a Standard” chart above and notice that the last two words are not “in” the standard, they are *implied*.

Note that some districts and states are working with “pre-packaged” unwrapped standards that someone else has put together. While these might be good to use as a starting point, keep in mind that the benefit of the six steps above is the *conversation* that gets teams of teachers to discuss the meanings behind the standards and then come to consensus about what they will teach. Also keep in mind that this may be an intimidating process for a number of teachers. Consider having teams unwrap a vertical strand of standards *within a staff meeting* so teachers can ask questions and receive support the first time through.

Chapter 5 – Developing Scales (Rubrics) to Determine Proficiency with Learning Targets

When teacher teams go through the process of powering and unwrapping the standards, they make great strides in clarifying their understanding of the CCSS. However, there is one more step that teacher teams can take – creating proficiency scales (like rubrics) for each of the learning targets that result from unwrapping the standards. By creating proficiency scales, the team explores what learning looks like when a student is just beginning to show knowledge of the target, what it looks like when the student is proficient, and what it looks like when the student goes beyond proficiency. Because this step can be accomplished in the future, and many teams are not yet ready for this step, it is not included in the summary. See Chapter 5 in the book for the full description.

Chapter 6 – Determining Pacing

The next step your teams can take to make sure that your school or district has a cohesive instructional plan is to create *pacing guides*. Pacing guides are defined differently throughout the country, so you can use the definition below:

A pacing guide is a thoughtfully planned and designed sequence of teaching and learning that outlines specific *learning targets* to be addressed within a grading period or unit of instruction.

It is important to note what it is *not*. A pacing guide is not so prescriptive that it prevents teachers from responding to the needs of students who may need more time to learn. It is important that schools provide a way for some students to have time for remediation or extension activities. Some schools do this with a daily intervention period.

There are benefits to having a pacing guide. Not only does it allow everyone, including special education teachers, to know where the students are in the curriculum, but when teachers are in a similar place in the curriculum they can have more meaningful conversations about data, planning, teaching, and learning. The authors recommend that teachers themselves create those guides rather than having the district pass them down. If the district wants pacing guides for the entire district, then representatives from each school can form a team to create them. Furthermore, creating pacing guides as a *team* will help to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

After the district or the principal decides *who* will develop the pacing guides, the team needs to decide the time frames each pacing guide will cover. The authors suggest either using the grading period or unit of instruction. Note that to be clear about what teachers will be teaching, the team will be mapping out the *learning targets* they identified when unwrapping the standards (in Chapter 4), not the standards themselves. Below is an excerpt of a pacing guide for third grade ELA for the Trimester 1. Note that, for example, RL.3.1 is the standard and RL.3.1a and RL.3.1b are the unwrapped learning targets:

Third-Grade English Language Arts Targets for First Trimester (from p.101 in the book)	
Reading: Literature	
RL.3.1a	Ask questions to demonstrate understanding of a text referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
RL.3.1b	Answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
RL.3.3a	Describe characters in a story (traits, motivation, or feelings).
RL.3.3b	Explain how characters’ actions contribute to the sequence of events.
Language	
L.3.1.ia	Produce simple sentences.
L.3.1.ib	Produce compound sentences.
L.3.1.ic	Produce complex sentences.
Writing: Narrative	
W.3.3aa	Establish a situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters.
W.3.3ab	Organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
W.3.3ba	Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events.
W.3.3bb	Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to show the response of characters to situations.

In order to figure out how the targets should be grouped and ordered it is helpful for teams to consider the following four elements:

Rigor and time: The team should consider how difficult each learning target is so they can decide how much time to allot for teaching it. They should also take into account when during the school year (the beginning, before holidays) might *not* be the most appropriate times to teach more challenging learning targets.

Connections to other targets: Consider which learning targets would be best to teach together. For example, the CCSS Reading Standards for Informational Text could be taught with the Writing targets for informational and explanatory text.

Instructional implications and resources: Keep notes on ideas for instruction or resources that come up.

Grading period or unit of instruction: Should this target be the *focus* of a unit or grading period? Should this target be taught in more than one unit or grading period?

In order to organize this information, the team can use a simple template to help them develop a pacing guide:

Learning Target or Standard	Rigor and Time	Connections to Other Targets	Instructional Implications and Resources	For Which Grading Period or Unit of Instruction

Every state using the CCSS is part of one of two consortia (PARCC or SBAC). The team should look at their materials as they develop pacing guides. For example, PARCC has a content framework that divides the year into four quarters. Below is an excerpt of a PARCC-aligned pacing guide (from PARCC) for 8th grade.

	Reading Complex Texts RL/RI.8.10		Writing to Texts W.8.1-6, 9-10, RL/RI.8.1-10			Research Project W.8.1, 2, 4-9, RL/RI.8.1-10
	1 Extended Text	3-5 Short Texts	Routine Writing	4-6 Analyses	1-2 Narratives	1 Research Project
Quarter 1						
Quarter 2						
Quarter 3						
Quarter 4						

The team should gather all necessary resources – including the unwrapped standards, other curriculum guides or maps, the calendar of all grading periods, assessment dates, and days off – to help with the pacing process. Creating a pacing *guide* is the first step. The team may want to go further to create more specific units or a daily pacing *calendar* that outlines which learning targets will be taught on which *days*. Keep in mind that the team should build in days for reteaching and extension to allow teachers some flexibility.

Chapter 7 – Defining Rigor and Assessment Practices

Purpose of Summative and Formative Assessments

When used in the right way, assessment is one of the most powerful tools to improve teaching and learning. *Summative* assessments occur at the *end* of the learning cycle and can be helpful in determining whether the pacing, curriculum, and instructional strategies are working. They also tell us whether students have mastered *multiple* learning targets and see the connections between those targets. *Formative assessments* – often developed in collaboration with a team as *common* formative assessments – assess whether students have mastered *individual* learning targets and help to identify those students who need more assistance or more of a challenge.

Aligning Assessments with the Rigor of the CCSS

In order to best prepare students for college and careers, the CCSS are more rigorous than previous standards and have a much greater emphasis on application and relevance. In ELA there are much higher expectations for close reading and in mathematics students are expected to do more problem solving.

In assessing students on the CCSS, the key is to *match* the rigor of the standards with the appropriate type of assessment. For example, if a teacher believes she taught her students to think analytically but only tests them on basic knowledge, the assessment won't be valid. In order to make this match, it helps to be clear about the different types of assessment:

1. *Selected-Response Items* – These are questions that have the answers already there – usually multiple-choice or true-false questions. These are quick and easy to grade and will yield the same score regardless of who grades it. To ensure it is *reliable* make sure there are enough questions (about 4 per learning target) so students can't simply guess and get it right. Also, make sure to use the simplest vocabulary possible if reading comprehension is not being assessed. If you want to use the results *formatively* to determine which students have learned certain learning targets, make sure you *only include one target in each question*. Consider this question, "Which of the following numbers is a factor of 250 and a multiple of 5?" If a student gets it wrong you won't know if she is struggling with factors or multiples. Good test writers can create selected-response answers that expose students' misconceptions.

2. *Constructed-Response Items* – These questions ask students to provide a short or long answer to show their understanding. Students are provided with material in addition to a question. For example, in ELA students might have a political cartoon or speech to

interpret or in math they might have a graph to analyze. These types of questions allow you to *see* the student’s thinking and work well with the CCSS which often ask students to engage in higher levels of thinking.

3. *Performance Tasks* – Both SBAC and PARCC include performance tasks. These types of questions are meant for more complex analysis – such as writing or research skills which cannot be adequately assessed using the above two types of assessment. There are a few examples here: www.smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks/

4. *Technology-Enhanced Items* – Both PARCC and SBAC use technology-enhanced assessment items – opportunities for higher-order thinking on the computer. Examples include categorizing items in math, creating graphs and charts, reordering sentences in writing, or highlighting a concept in reading. Even if you don’t have the technology, you can still assess this type of reasoning using other methods such as manipulatives, editing writing samples, or reordering sentences with numbers rather than a computer.

Planning Formative and Summative Assessments

To plan assessments, work with the unwrapped learning targets rather than entire standards. For *formative* assessments it is best to assess for only *two* learning targets, and assess only one per question. For summative assessments, you will want to assess multiple standards and assess them in combination. If there are too many learning targets to assess, choose the most important ones. Then, use the work you did (in Chapter 4, Unwrapping) to determine the level of rigor required to meet each target (using whichever taxonomy works for you – Bloom’s, Marzano’s, etc.) Once you determine the level of rigor of each learning target, you can choose the most appropriate type of assessment. For learning targets that use verbs at the thinking level of *analysis and above*, you will most likely use constructed-response rather than selected response questions.

Principals and leaders may want to be aware of common mistakes so they can help their teams with assessment. First, many teachers write their assessment around *standards* rather than *learning targets* and these are often too broad to pinpoint a student’s difficulty. Second, teachers often assess too many targets. And third, teachers may create assessments that are not at the appropriate level of rigor. Another important note for leaders is if you want teachers to use common formative assessments to help them plan next steps, these assessments should *not* be used to evaluate teachers or those teachers will feel less comfortable honestly sharing their results.

Chapter 8 – Using Rubrics to Score Assessments and Provide Feedback

A rubric describes specifically what the learning targets will look like when students have met them. This is another step in making the standards clear to both teachers and students by putting these expectations in writing.

The Purpose of Rubrics

Because the CCSS call for more higher-order thinking, teachers will be using more constructed-responses and performance tasks. Since these types of assessments are more subjective to grade, it helps for teachers to use *rubrics*. Even more importantly, when teams of teachers score student work collaboratively with rubrics, there is a much greater chance that there will be more consistent grading of assessments. There are different ways to collaboratively score student work in order to norm the grading process. For example, teachers can individually score the same piece of student work and then discuss their rationale. There are two protocols for collaborative scoring in the book on pages 199 and 200.

The second important purpose of rubrics is to describe exactly what students must know and be able to do to reach proficiency and beyond. Well-written rubrics provide the critical feedback students need to know how they are performing and specifically what they need to do to improve. According to research, effective feedback is one of the most important tools to improve student learning!

Types of Rubrics

There is no one right way to create rubrics – what is important is that they clearly communicate what successful mastery of the learning targets looks like. To ensure that students understand the rubrics, share the rubrics with them, write them in student-friendly language, and consider providing them with samples of work at different levels (e.g., *not proficient*, *partially proficient*, *proficient* and *beyond proficient*). Remember for formative assessments, rubrics should cover about two learning targets while summative assessments usually cover more. Below are some different ways to organize your rubrics.

Holistic vs Analytic Rubrics

Analytic rubrics examine each learning target separately. They describe in detail what proficiency expectations look like at every level -- and are therefore best used for formative assessment because they direct students toward what to do next. See the example below:

Learning Target	Beyond Proficient	Proficient	Partially Proficient	Not Proficient
Describe the difference in information provided from firsthand and secondhand accounts.	The response explains thoroughly and accurately the difference in information from the two types of accounts, provides at least three specific details from the text to support the differences, and generalizes how and why the accounts are different.	The response explains the difference in information from the firsthand and secondhand account and provides at least 3 specific details from the text about the differences.	The response demonstrates only an understanding of the definitions of <i>firsthand account</i> and <i>secondhand account</i> .	The response doesn’t demonstrate an understanding of the difference between a firsthand and secondhand account.

In contrast, *holistic* rubrics combine a number of different criteria or learning targets into one score. SBAC uses a holistic rubric to assess argumentative writing (to see their samples for grades 3 – 11 go to: www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/TaskItemSpecifications/EnglishLanguageArtsLiteracy/ELARubrics.pdf). Below is an example from p.131:

3	The solution is thorough and accurate. The diagram or drawing supports the thinking done to solve the problem.
2	The solution is not complete although the answer may be accurate. The diagram or drawing does not provide enough information to support the thinking done to solve the problem.
1	The solution is not thorough or accurate. If a diagram or drawing is present, it does not provide enough information to support the thinking done to solve the problem.

Generic vs Task-Specific Rubrics

The rubrics above are for *specific tasks*. However, your team may decide to use *generic* rubrics which cover more general skills that are assessed repeatedly, such as student writing and problem solving. There is an example on p.133.

Chapter 9 – Using Quality Instructional Practices

The CCSS do *not* mandate specific instructional practices. They leave it up to educators to design instruction that will help students meet the standards. This chapter does not present specific instructional practices to use nor is it calling for “Stepford Teachers” in which instruction looks identical across classrooms. Rather, this chapter will outline three important implications for effective instruction given the new demands and emphases of the CCSS. Before diving in to these implications, it is helpful to remember that for instruction to be effective, educators must start with the *end* in mind -- the knowledge and skills students are to learn. It is only *after* educators are clear about this step, that they then design appropriate assessments, and ultimately plan instruction.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE

Increased Rigor and Relevance

One definition of rigor from Elliot Washor and Charles Mojkowski is excerpted here, “Truly rigorous learning – both academic and nonacademic – involves deep immersion in a subject over time, with learners using sophisticated texts, tools, and language in real-world settings.” Like the CCSS’s demand that students apply knowledge and skills, rigor here involves *relevance* – not necessarily relevance to a student’s personal experience, but rather, learning is relevant when students have a purpose for knowing it. The rigor in the CCSS requires students to read challenging texts, use those texts to support their arguments, rely on multiple sources of information, and really struggle with problems. No longer can we scaffold the way we used to when we provided plenty of frontloading of information in order to create struggle-free learning. Students must now participate much more actively as they struggle with *rigorous* and *relevant* issues and problems.

Incorporating the Four Cs: Creativity, Communication, Collaboration, and Critical Thinking

The CCSS aim to prepare students for 21st century college and careers. One organization, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, has outlined a number of important student outcomes that students need to succeed in the 21st century that can be summarized as the four Cs: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. These should be integrated into daily instruction.

- *Creativity* – To help design instruction that incorporates creative thinking, it helps to first consider a few questions: Are we providing opportunities for students to think creatively or are we designing learning so that there is only one correct answer? Are we allowing students to create new ideas or approaches to dealing with an issue or a problem or do we point to one correct way? Furthermore, we must consider whether we are providing opportunities for students to think creatively *in collaboration with others*. Incorporating creativity might mean allowing options for choice, having students create alternative endings to a text, asking students to communicate with a media presentation they’ve designed, and group brainstorming of solutions to real-life math problems.
- *Communication* – In the 21st century our students will need a much broader range of communication skills. In addition to clear oral and traditional written skills, they will need to learn to communicate through blogging, Web 2.0 tools, live conferencing, and much more online. They will need to understand a variety of audiences and learn to choose the most appropriate tool for communication.
- *Collaboration* – Collaboration involves several skills: being able to work effectively and respectfully with others, being flexible and able to compromise in working toward a common goal, and taking responsibility for collaborative work.
- *Critical Thinking* – Critical thinking involves reasoning effectively, analyzing, making judgments, solving problems, etc.

Scaffolding

Although the CCSS present a much higher level of standards than many of our students are used to, we can’t just expect them to rise to this level without our support in the form of scaffolding. We clearly can’t hold our students’ hands to the degree that many of us used to, for example, by frontloading a difficult passage by defining all of the challenging vocabulary ahead of time. Now we need to give our students time to struggle more. However, they won’t meet the higher expectations unless we provide instruction that carefully and intentionally releases more and more of the responsibility for learning to the students. One way this type of “scaffolding” can occur is through a simple model of “I do it. We do it. You do it.” This model may begin with the teacher modeling, then the group processes and practices, and finally individual students practice and master on their own.

While implementing the new CCSS may seem overwhelming, hopefully teachers can find examples of the three implications for instruction listed above in their current teaching practice and can focus more on *refinement* than a complete redo. Teachers may want to choose one area to focus on at a time such as starting with scaffolding to help students comprehend challenging texts. What is important is that teachers examine the *impact* of their teaching practices on student learning and adjust accordingly. It is also important for teachers to stay up to date with research on the latest instructional practices in some way (following a blog, participating in a webinar, or reading current books – The Main Idea helps with this!)

Chapter 10 – Responding When Students Need More Help

If teachers give a formative assessment and then do nothing with the results, this is no better than *not* giving the assessment in the first place. This chapter is about what to do when students need more help. Historically teachers have felt overwhelmed by the idea of differentiating to meet the varying levels of their students. Furthermore, they mostly relied on push-in or pull-out help to address the needs of struggling students. When teams work collaboratively they are much more successful in identifying and addressing the needs of all of their students. Furthermore, when teams have already outlined what students will be learning and how they will be assessed, they are in a much better position to provide the time and support students need. Below is a way teams can respond to struggling students.

Observe What the Data Show

The first step involves *observing what the data show*. If the team has designed a formative assessment using the principles in this book – that is, to cover just a few learning targets – then they can quickly and easily respond to the data. For example, a math assessment covering two learning targets might have four multiple-choice questions to assess the first one, and a constructed-response question for the second. Teachers can easily create a list of students who did not reach proficiency on the first (fewer than three correct) and those who did not reach proficiency on the second (lower than a level 3 on the rubric).

Create Time to Respond

The next step involves *creating time to respond* to struggling students. In order to successfully meet the needs of all students, there must be time set aside – during the **regular** instructional period – for corrective instruction (some call this Tier 1 response). This time may be structured in different ways. It is important to clarify that this does *not* occur as a separate class or intervention. When creating pacing guides (see Chapter 6), make sure to schedule in this time ahead of time. Below are a few examples of how to do it:

Elementary school – If there are 3 teachers who teach the same grade, the day after the assessment, during regular class instruction one teacher would take all the proficient students, one would take the partially proficient (level 2), and the third would take those who were *not* proficient. Each would teach a different lesson to help each individual group progress.

Middle or High school – Set up the schedule so that two sections of the same course meet during the same instructional period. After the assessment one teacher takes the proficient students and the other takes those not yet proficient.

At any level – Teachers can always keep their own students and respond by planning different activities or lessons.

Design the Right Response and Develop a Good Hypothesis

Finally, keep in mind that the team must *design the right response* based on a *good hypothesis*. When it is time to re-teach, teachers must go back to the unwrapped standards and consider the cognitive demand of the missed learning targets. This will allow teachers to go back to the place where the students’ misunderstanding might have started. Then teams should come together to brainstorm a hypothesis for why this might have happened based on their professional judgment and experience with teaching students at this level. For example, consider the 4th grade standard, “Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.” Based on the unwrapped learning targets, the teachers see that the students’ confusion may have come from:

- Not knowing what an inference is
- Not understanding the text itself
- An inability to connect the information in the text to an inference

So if, for example, the team believes the errors came from the third bullet – seeing the connection between the information in the text and the inference a reader makes -- then they need to make this connection *explicit*. One way to do this might be for the teacher to *provide students* with an inference based on a given paragraph and have students just identify the sentence that supports this inference. After practicing this until mastery, then the teacher would select a specific sentence in a paragraph and ask the students to make the inference. Note that in order to make a *good hypothesis* about why the students didn’t understand, it is helpful if there are actual student work samples to see the mistakes made. Furthermore, *teams* are more likely to create good hypotheses than *individual* teachers because they can pool their repertoire of instructional strategies to approach the problem. It is important that the principal emphasize the effectiveness of the *team* rather than the *individual* to identify student struggles and to work together to pool class time, professional knowledge and resources, and to plan and carry out responses.

Chapter 11 – Responding When Students Are Proficient

Because space is short in this summary, if you want more information about responding when students are proficient, take a look at Chapter 11. Because we often don't know which students will be bored until they are already bored, the authors suggest using some type of preassessment. Teachers can give a preassessment (even one that looks exactly like the summative assessment) a few weeks before a unit to have time to adjust instruction. Another suggestion is to give daily end-of-period assessments – like exit tickets or journal entries – so teachers can determine which students already know the material. Some teachers prefer to give an initial assessment after a first class in the unit. If teachers are not ready for this, they can rely on the common formative assessments. Once they know which students have already mastered the learning targets, they can be flexible about time and grouping to meet the proficient students' needs, as was suggested in the previous chapter. Furthermore, even though many teachers worry about finding activities that are challenging enough, this is where the collaborative team can help. By sharing strategies for what has worked and by examining the language of more challenging standards, these two approaches will help point teachers toward possible strategies.

THE MAIN IDEA's PD ideas for Collaborating for Success With the Common Core

There are a number of PD ideas here. Choose ONE to implement that fits with where your school is in its adoption of the CCSS.

Understanding the Common Core and its Implications

1. Most schools in states that have adopted the CCSS have already introduced the CCSS, but if you feel your teachers still struggle with all of the terminology, copy pages 13-15 in the book with all of the definitions of terms like clusters, domains, strands, etc. Then have them go through one of the activities to help them explore the CCSS on pp.1-2 in the summary (1) *Vertical Strands Walks*, (2) *End-in-Mind Skills Exploration*, (3) *Assessment Exploration*, or (4) *Scavenger Hunts* (see the sample on p.2 of the summary).

2. To help teachers understand the depth of change required with the new CCSS, have them circle all of the verbs in the standards for the grades they teach. Then in groups have them brainstorm the **major shifts** they see in the CCSS as compared to their previous teaching *or* give them the list of shifts below and have them brainstorm any implications for teaching and learning.

Shifts required by the CCSS	Implications for teaching and learning (in terms of instructional strategies, assessments, resources, time, etc.)
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Changes in Expectations in the CCSS for ELA/Literacy</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Text complexity 2. Informational text 3. Interdisciplinary literacy 4. Close reading 5. Text analysis 6. Argumentative writing 7. Academic vocabulary and language 	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Changes in Expectations in the CCSS for Mathematics</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fewer but more focused standards 2. Habits of mind 3. Progression of skills and concepts 4. Procedural fluency 	

Prioritizing and Unwrapping the CCSS

1. Many schools are so overwhelmed with understanding and adopting the CCSS, that they haven't made time to *prioritize* the standards they will teach in each grade. While this may appear to be *more* work, it will help schools in the long run by providing a focus for teachers and ensuring consistency across classes. It's worth it to have teachers work in teams for a *limited* amount of time (the book recommends 20 minutes) to highlight the standards they believe to be the most important based on these criteria:

1. **Endurance** – A standard that will be important over a lifetime – like understanding place value.
2. **Leverage** – A standard with cross-curricular implications – like unit rate because it is also taught in science classes.
3. **Readiness for the next level** – A standard that is necessary to prepare students for the next level of learning.

Then have the group discuss their thinking and come to a consensus on the standards they will delve into deeply. This does *not* mean they do not teach the other standards, it just means they will emphasize those they agreed to prioritize.

2. It is helpful for new and veteran teachers alike to “unwrap” the standards (perhaps starting with the prioritized ones) to ascertain specifically what skills and knowledge are at the heart of each standard. Start by modeling the process. Present a sample standard, like this fifth-grade standard from Chapter 4 below:

Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text. (RI.5.3)

Then ask teachers to brainstorm what they believe to be the explicit and implied knowledge and skills contained in this standard. Here are some possibilities of what they might come up with:

- Read the informational text (depicting historical, scientific, or technical information).
- Identify the key details that inform the reader of important events, ideas, concepts, or processes.
- Analyze the relationships between multiple events, ideas, concepts, or processes.
- Synthesize the connections between the concepts and communicate the influences, relationships, and links among key events, ideas, concepts, or processes.

3. Then have teachers discuss the benefits of “unwrapping” standards and the difference between unwrapping them individually versus doing it as a team. Next, send teachers off to practice this “unwrapping” process with a few more examples. You may want to give them a template (see different samples on pp.188-194 of the book). This is the most basic template (next page):

Unwrapping a Standard

Standard to address:	
Learning Targets	Knowledge students must know:
	Skills students will do:
Vocabulary (explicit):	
Vocabulary (implied):	

Teams of teachers can practice using the template to unwrap a Grade 3 Reading Standard for Literature:

Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text (RL.3.2)

Or they can unwrap a Grade 2 mathematics content standard in the domain Number and Operations in Base Ten:

Compare two three-digit numbers based on meanings of the hundreds, tens, and ones digits using $>$, $=$, and $<$ symbols to record the results of comparisons. (2.NBT.4)

(Note that there are suggested unwrapped learning targets for these two standards on p. 61 of the book, but keep in mind there is no *one right way* to unwrap a standard. What is important is for teachers to develop a common understanding of the standard.)

Rigor and Assessments

After unwrapping the standards (above), it is important for teachers to know the *level of rigor* of each learning target so they can plan the most appropriate assessment. In the same teams that unwrapped a few sample standards above, now have those teachers use one of the models of rigor below and do two things:

1. Determine the level of rigor for each of the unwrapped learning targets.
2. Choose a learning target that is at a higher level of rigor (Level Three or Four) and brainstorm possible appropriate assessments (constructed responses, performance tasks, or technology-enhanced items) that would *match* that rigor.

3 Models to Examine the Rigor of Each Standard		
Bloom's Revised Taxonomy	Marzano and Kendall's New Taxonomy	Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK)
Remember (recall, identify) Understand (interpret, explain)	Level One: Retrieval (recognize, recall, use)	Level One: Recall (DOK1) (define, identify, calculate, list)
Apply (execute, implement, carry out)	Level Two: Comprehension (integrate, depict)	Level Two: Skills and Concepts (DOK2) (infer, estimate, compare, organize)
Analyze (organize, compare, differentiate)	Level Three: Analysis (match, classify, generalize, analyze errors, judge, deduce)	Level Three: Strategic Thinking (DOK3) (revise, compare, hypothesize, cite evidence)
Evaluate (judge, critique) Create (generate, plan, produce)	Level Four: Knowledge Utilization (decide, problem solve, experiment, investigate)	Level Four: Extended Thinking (DOK4) (design, connect, apply, critique, analyze)

Norming the Grading Process

Even if your school adopts the CCSS and has lots of discussions about creating Common Core-aligned units, unless teachers come together to *norm* their grading, expectations may still be uneven from teacher to teacher. Because so much of the Common Core involves higher order thinking, teachers will be using more constructed response assessments which involve subjectivity.

1. Set aside a staff meeting after teachers have given an assessment and ask teachers to bring in samples of student work that they believe represent a 4 (above proficiency), 3 (proficient) and 2 (below proficient) and one they have not yet determined a grade for. If you plan to have teachers meet in groups of 5, have each teacher bring in 5 copies of each piece of student work. Give the groups time to read and then discuss the rationale for giving the grades they gave. Groups should list the characteristics of a "4," "3," "2," and "1."
2. Then using these descriptions, the group should collaboratively grade the one piece of student work each teacher brought that does not yet have a grade.

Responding to Struggling Students

It's no longer enough to teach and move on. Now we need to help *all* students reach higher levels.

1. Discuss your school/grade team/department's current approach to dealing with students who are struggling.
2. Discuss how responding to struggling students *collaboratively* might be more effective than doing it individually.
3. Discuss the suggestion in the book for creating *time to respond* to struggling students *within* the regular instructional period (below). Could this work at your school? Could it be adapted?

Make sure that several teachers who teach the same grade or course teach during the same period during the day. After a common assessment, have one teacher instruct students who were proficient and another instruct those who were *not*.