The U.S. Library of Congress has unveiled an amazing resource that supports the Common Core State Standards. It’s located at http://www.loc.gov/teachers and is great for working with primary sources.

**Classroom Materials**

Created by teachers for teachers, these ready-to-use materials provide easy ways to incorporate the Library’s unparalleled primary sources into instruction. Find classroom materials that meet your state standards

**Lesson Plans** – Teacher-created lesson plans using Library of Congress primary sources.

**Themed Resources** – One-stop access to the Library’s best exhibitions, activities, primary sources, and lesson plans on popular curricular themes.

**Primary Source Sets** – Sets of selected primary sources on specific topics.

**Presentations & Activities** – Presentations and activities offer media-rich historical context or interactive opportunities for exploration to both teachers and students.

**Collection Connections** – Historical context and ideas for teaching with specific Library of Congress primary source collections.

The Library’s teacher resources are an excellent source for teachers trying to meet key CCSS goals, including critical thinking, analyzing informational texts, and working with primary sources.

*Article information from a post on Edudemic by Jeff Dunn
Photo retrieved from nikonians.org 10/31/12*
Writing and the Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) contain ten anchor standards for writing. The first three standards focus on text types and purposes. Standards four through six outline student expectations for the production and distribution of writing. Standards seven through nine focus on research to build and present knowledge. The focus of standard ten is the range of writing.

The ISBE home page has a helpful component, the Learning Progressions, designed to assist teachers with clearly seeing learning progressions across content areas and grade levels. New learning in each grade is underlined.

The progressions for writing are shown for each standard. For example, Standard One, Write arguments to support claims... using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence, can be followed from kindergarten through grades 11/12. This is true for all of the ten writing standards. The tool also outlines progressions for the reading standards, speaking/listening, and language standards.

Take some time to look at the progression tool. As you consider what your students will be expected to do in the three types of writing (arguments, informative/explanatory, and narrative), consider what strategies are currently meeting standards in your classrooms as students write in response to text.

Click here for more information.

Writing Strategies for Fourth Grade

The Intriguing Question...

Students in fourth grade will be expected to write different types of text for different purposes. They will write arguments (Standard One), informative/explanatory texts (Standard Two) and narratives (Standard Three).

As they write arguments and informative/explanatory texts, the Standards state the topic must be clearly introduced to the readers.

One way to do this and to capture the readers’ is to begin with a question (Portalupi & Fletcher, 2004). To begin, students read texts that begins with a question. Have the students discuss what they notice. Ask students if the beginning (the question) made them want to read more. Then, have students think about a recent piece of their written work to see if it could be improved by starting with a question. Provide an opportunity for students to incorporate this technique into future writing. Remind students beginning with a question can sharpen their thinking and organization of their writing.


Take a Look at the ELA Teaching Strategies

The ELA content specialists compiled reading strategies for informational text for each of the ten anchor standards in reading. There is also a complete set of reading strategies that can be used with literature. The strategies are grouped by K-5 and 6-12 configurations. They can be found on the ISBE website.

As you look at the standard specific strategies, notice that many of the strategies also ask students to write as part of their response to deepen or show their understanding. Whenever possible, the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing should be honored.

It is suggested that each teacher consider the needs of his/her students, try a strategy, and adapt it as required by the students’ facility with it. Also included in the strategy toolset is a list of ways the teacher might assess students’ acquisition of a particular standard. Formative assessments, as shown in the strategy toolset, provide teachers with current, insightful information about each student.

Click here for more information.
Focus on Standard for Mathematical Practice 4

The fourth Practice Standard, **Model with Mathematics**, requires students to apply the mathematics they know to solve problems arising in everyday life, society, and the workforce. Students who can apply what they know are comfortable making assumptions and approximations to simplify a complicated situation, realizing they may need revision later. They are able to identify important quantities in practical situations and map their relationships using tools (diagrams, two-way tables, flowcharts, and formulas). They interpret results in the context of the situation, reflecting on whether the results make sense.

How do I encourage MP4?

Provide problems that require students to:

- Apply techniques from current mathematical knowledge.
- Make assumptions and simplifications in a real-world situation.
- Execute some or all of the modeling cycle.
- Analyze data at hand, estimate data that are missing and draw reasonable recommendations.

Fourth Grade Example Problem

**Digging for Dinosaurs**

This lesson comes from Inside Mathematics as a Problem of the Month, and is designed to be used school wide to promote problem-solving skills. There are six levels providing scaffolding for student ability and grade level.

Students determine the best rate plan to visit a museum when given a number of rate plans that have changed to increase both variability of cost and time. Students explain and defend why they chose a specific plan.


Have You Read Any Good Progressions Lately?

The Common Core State Standards in Mathematics were built on progressions. They are a useful tool to support and enhance understanding by describing the domains or conceptual categories and how they evolve across grade levels. The progression documents emphasize the coherence of curriculum from year to year. The documents reveal the logical structure of Mathematics and are based on cognitive development research. Each progression highlights the standards with detailed descriptions, example problems and compelling ideas to engage students. Explicit connections are made within and across grade levels. Read the progressions to develop a deeper understanding of the expectations of the Common Core.

Which ones will you read?

K–6 Progression on Geometry
K–5 Progression on Measurement and Data (measurement part)
K–5 progression on Measurement and Data (data part)
K–5 Progression on Number and Operations in Base Ten
K–5 Progression on Counting and Cardinality and Operations and Algebraic Thinking
3–5 progression on Number and Operations—Fractions

We neither fear complexity nor embrace it for its own sake, but rather face it with the faith that simplicity and understanding are within reach.

-Fred Adler
Winter celebrations abound in our schools and communities, and we wish you a season of joy! At the same time, we acknowledge that for many, holidays can make more acute the pain of hardship. Poverty is a reality for too many of our students and is just one barrier to learning that many students strive to overcome. We can support these efforts by focusing on students’ strengths and providing protective factors within the classroom environment. (CL4, CL12)

This month we continue to focus on an organizational mindset that can help us diminish the effects of barriers to learning, while building the climate, competencies, and engagement needed for optimal conditions for learning for all students. We can do this by providing learning supports that focus first on best practices that benefit all students. (CL1, CL10)

Once learning support “core” programming (defined expectations, acknowledgement and correction systems) are in place for your classroom, what data practices can support your effectiveness in addressing classroom conditions necessary for learning? What data are available for evaluating how well students are engaging or re-engaging in the academic process? Beyond student achievement data, how can you monitor student attendance, behavior, and involvement in learning activities throughout the day? (CL3)

Attendance data: Which students are absent? Number of days? Are there absence patterns and identifiable reasons for absences or attendance?

Behavior data: How many students display inappropriate behaviors and/or receive office discipline referrals within a day/week? What are reasons for misbehaviors? How many students display appropriate behaviors within a day/week? What are reasons for the appropriate behaviors?

Involvement data: What are ways you can monitor engagement, disengagement, and/or re-engagement? Are there noticeable patterns during certain class periods? Why or why not?

More on the use of data...

Effective learning supports stem from data focused on student strengths. When teachers identify reasons for appropriate and inappropriate skill development, they can build the classroom environment to support growth more effectively.

One strategy often used to collect behavioral data in classrooms is a green, yellow, red card system (or age-appropriate equivalent), meant to visually indicate to students when they behave inappropriately. But, what would happen if the teacher built an environment focused instead on the strengths of students? What kind of data could be collected to identify when and why students behave appropriately? The teacher focus then shifts to looking for and celebrating behaviors that are conducive to learning. (CL7, CL8, CL10, CL22)

In order to examine the conditions for learning within their classrooms, teachers can work more efficiently and effectively by:

- Focusing on engaging and re-engaging students in the core curricula, and
- Using data to identify the role academic and environmental factors serve in improving student engagement and re-engagement.

Find more information about this Condition for Learning (CL3) and others online through ISBE.

Continuous School Improvement Connection:
The Conditions for Learning (CL) indicators referenced here are also included as indicators of best practice in the Rising Star on IIRCS system.

Helpful Resources

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/ The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University houses writing resources and instructional material provided as a free service of the Writing Lab at Purdue.

www.isbe.net/learningsupports Learning Supports site including Conditions for Learning indicators and an A-Z index of resources for helping students

http://www.oercommons.org/ Open Educational Resources, free teaching and learning materials

https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos?categories=topics_common-core the Teaching Channel currently offers videos of K-12 mathematics teaching aligned with the Common Core State Standards

Visit http://www.isbe.state.il.us/common_core/htmls/news.htm to download this newsletter.