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


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.
Writing and the Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) include ten Anchor Standards for writing. The first three of these standards focus on text types and purposes. Student expectations for the production and distribution of writing are outlined in the fourth, fifth and sixth standards. Research to build and present knowledge is the focus of the seventh, eighth and ninth standards. Standard Ten covers the range of writing.

The ISBE home page has a helpful component, the Learning Progressions, designed to assist teachers in seeing learning progressions across content areas and grade levels. Terms indicating new learning in each grade are underlined and the progressions for writing are shown for each standard.

For example, Standard One, *Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence*, can be followed from kindergarten through grades 11/12. This is true for all ten of the writing standards. The tool also outlines progressions for the Reading, Speaking/Language Standards. Click [here](#) for more information.

Using Mysteries to Develop Argument Writing

Teaching students how to develop arguments using valid evidence to support their claims can be a challenge. According to George Hillocks, Jr., some of the basic parts of an argument include the evidence, the rule which corresponds to the evidence and the conclusion. He suggests teaching students how to write arguments of fact by presenting them with mysteries to solve.

1. Provide the students with a picture of a crime scene which will capture their attention.
2. Ask them to examine the picture while you read aloud the scenario which corresponds to the scene.
3. Provide time for students to share their views on what transpired as well as evidence to support their claims.
4. Have students record their evidence, the rule and their conclusions in three separate columns on their papers.
5. Provide time for students to share their work and to make revisions.


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 and 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 considers the needs of his/her students, implements a strategy, and adapts 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.

“Argument is the soul of education.”

*Neil Postman, 1997*
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.

Ninth Grade MARS Task

**Interpreting Categorical and Quantitative Data**

This task comes from the Mathematics Assessment Project. A variety of Grades 6-12 lessons and tasks may be found here, created by the Mathematics Assessment Resource Service (MARS). They provide a rubric and examples of student work for each task.

Students analyze a variety of questions regarding probability and statistical information. Several graphical methods of representing data need to be interpreted successfully in this task.

http://map.mathshell.org/materials/tasks.php?taskid=299#task299

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

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. There is currently only one High School Progression available.

High School Progression on Statistics and Probability

More are expected soon at:

http://math.arizona.edu/~ime/progressions/
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 and 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 IIRC 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