One of the great things about the Common Core is that 45 states can now share resources. We at Capture the Core strongly suggest your first stop should be the ISBE website for Common Core Support (see right).

What follows are just a few online tools you might find helpful as you transition to the CCSS.

**The Common Core iPhone and iPad apps.** These free downloads are a great quick and easy reference.

**Socrative** Formative Assessment is a key to student learning. This site provides a free student response system for doing formative assessing. Students also find it very engaging. [http://www.socrative.com/](http://www.socrative.com/)

**Master Connect** This site may be used to find common formative assessments and Common Core grading tools. [http://www.masteryconnect.com/](http://www.masteryconnect.com/)

**K–5 Math Teaching Resources.** This comprehensive site lists free Common Core resources, games and activities for the elementary math classroom. [http://www.k5mathteachingresources.com/](http://www.k5mathteachingresources.com/)


Information to all the state sites is constantly being added and updated, so check back often.
Questions Students Should Ask While They Are Reading
(Source: D. Buehl, (2012) Disciplinary Literacy: The Intersection with the Common Core Standards)

Questions for Any Subject
1. How has this author changed what I understand?
2. What perspective or authority does the author bring to what he/she tells me?
3. How is this similar to (or different from) other texts I’ve read?
4. How can I connect what this author is telling me to understand something better?
5. What does this author want me to understand?
6. What do I need to remember to make sense of this text?

Questions for Literary Fiction
1. Why is the author telling me this story and what theme might the author be explaining in this story?
2. Who is the author and how has the author’s perspective influenced the telling of this story?
3. What literary techniques does the author use and what seems to be the purpose for using these techniques?
4. How can I connect this story to my life and experiences?
5. How does the author have the characters interact with each other?
6. Who are the characters and what are the major events in the story?

A Closer Look at Comprehension and Vocabulary
1. Have students read multiple texts focused on the same topic to improve comprehension through text-to-text connections.
2. Foster students’ engagement with complex texts by teaching students how different textual purposes, genres, and modes require different strategies for reading.
3. Encourage students to choose texts, including nonfiction, for themselves, in addition to assigned ones, to help them see themselves as capable readers who can independently use reading capabilities they learn in class.
4. Develop students’ ability to engage in meaningful discussion of the complex texts they read in whole class, small group, and partner conversations so they can learn to negotiate and comprehend complex texts independently.

Feeding the Brains of Our Students

“School may be the only place where students are given the opportunity to build up the key parts of their brains that need to be developed before acquiring the ability to think deeply.

When we deny students the opportunity to read long, complex works, we are starving a part of their brains, and we start producing kids who can read but cannot get below the surface of what they read.

When teachers teach the standards through complex novels, the benefits to students are two fold: they not only learn the standards but also develop the deepest regions of their brains.

They stretch their brains to read longer, more challenging works... if we want our students to be complex thinkers, they need to be challenged to read long, complex texts.”

Focus on Mathematical Practice 3

The third Practice Standard, *Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others*, requires students to make conjectures, build a logical progression of statements and analyze situations by breaking them into cases. Students need to use counterexamples, justify conclusions, communicate them to others, and respond to the arguments of others. Students compare the effectiveness of two plausible arguments, distinguish correct logic or reasoning from that which is flawed, and explain any flaws. Students can listen or read the arguments of others, decide whether they make sense, and ask useful questions to clarify or improve the arguments.

**I have hardly ever known a mathematician who was capable of reasoning.**
Plato
427-347 BC

**How do I encourage MP3?**
Provide Problems that require students to do the following:

- Construct chains of logical steps to justify conjectures using precise language.
- Determine conditions under which an argument does or does not apply.
- Distinguish correct explanations from flawed. Conduct error analysis.
- Use diagrams, words and/or equations to solve.
- State logical assumptions being used.
- Test conjectures with specific examples.

**Illustrative Math - Tenth Grade**

The website, illustrativemathematics.org provides illustrations of the range and types of work that students experience in faithful implementation of CCSSM. Tasks provided are separated by grade level, domain, cluster and standard. Here’s an example: G-SRT.B.5: Pablo places the cue ball one foot from the south wall of the table and one foot from the west wall, as shown in the diagram below. He wants to bank the cue ball off of the east wall and into the pocket at the midpoint of the north wall. At what point will the cue ball hit the east wall?

From: http://illustrativemathematics.org/illustrations/651

**PARCC Model Content Frameworks**

Model Content Frameworks, http://parccmodelcontentframeworks.org, are offered by PARCC to help inform curriculum, instruction and assessment. MCF can assist in evaluating resources and provide awareness of the necessary balance of tasks as defined in the standards.

Elements for each High School course are noted in the diagram.

- Use the major, supporting and additional clusters to inform instructional decisions on time and resources, but do NOT teach them in that order.
- Use the supporting clusters and the practice standards to highlight the focus on the major work.
- Evaluate instructional materials based on the major, supporting and additional clusters, but do not use the MCF to do crosswalks. A curricular analysis needs to consider more than topic-matching by thinking of the spirit of the CCSSM.
Meeting Student Needs: A Layered Approach

By now, you are undoubtedly discovering your students’ unique personalities and talents. That is a joy of teaching! Yet you are likely also learning students’ unique challenges, and for some, personal situations that pose real barriers to learning. This can feel extremely overwhelming.

As a teacher who develops meaningful learning relationships with students, you are in a position to witness not only their academic needs, but also their interrelated physical, social, emotional, and behavioral needs. Yet your role as teacher does not require you to be an expert on the many different scenarios, of varying intensity, that impact your students’ learning.

So, how can you use awareness to help kids? You can begin by adopting an **organizational mindset** for your thoughts and efforts that is aligned with a **comprehensive system of learning supports** in your school and district.

Research proves the effectiveness of a **layered** approach to learning supports that provides best practices that benefit **all** students, early targeted interventions for **some**, and more intensive interventions for **few** depending on need.

This model may sound and look familiar, as it incorporates learning supports by expanding upon the same tiered, public health model that provides the organizing structure for academic and behavioral data-based Response to Intervention.

Classroom Connections

A layered approach emphasizes the importance of **universal practices to benefit all children**. These are within a teacher’s scope and include but are not limited to ensuring safety and security, validating feelings, and offering cultural sensitivity.

School programs that serve children in response to more specific, targeted needs may include mentoring or “check in” programs, for example. The goal is to reduce risk of intensified mental health and behavioral concerns.

A few students, however, may still require more intensive and individualized supports, often best provided through community partnerships.

Ask yourself, a school leader, and/or pupil support personnel what best practices are implemented for all students, to **promote** optimal conditions for, and **prevent** barriers to, learning? What resources and training are available to help teachers integrate universal learning supports?

When students face needs beyond the scope of the classroom, what procedures and resources are in place to address them early?

If you notice a gap in services in your school, you can inform your school leadership and improvement team so that it can be addressed through the continuous improvement process.

**Continuous School Improvement Connection:**

The Conditions for Learning indicator discussed here, CL1, is listed among indicators of best practice in the Rising Star on IIRC system.

**Helpful Resources**

- [http://www.essaytagger.com/commoncore](http://www.essaytagger.com/commoncore) Improve your formative assessment feedback as you build and share common core rubrics
- [www.isbe.net/learningsupports](http://www.isbe.net/learningsupports) Learning Supports site including Conditions for Learning indicators and an A-Z index of resources for educators
- [http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/k-12-instruction-strategies-amp-samples/613](http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/k-12-instruction-strategies-amp-samples/613) This site provides instructional strategies such as Socratic questioning and critical thinking in reading and writing.
- [http://www.corestandards.org/resources](http://www.corestandards.org/resources) This tool was written by the Authors of the Common Core Standards for Mathematics to guide the selection of Math Curriculum materials.

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Visit [http://www.isbe_state.il.us/common_core/htmls/news.htm](http://www.isbe_state.il.us/common_core/htmls/news.htm) to download this newsletter.