



Course Outline

For middle school teachers the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts/Literacy represent a new emphasis on reading, writing, speaking and listening across the subject areas. With the development of content literacy standards for social studies/history, science and technical subjects, teachers will need to increase the amount and the level of complexity of informational texts in their classrooms.

In this course, teachers will learn about the design and structure of the ELA/Literacy Standards, and how these standards represent shifts in three instructional areas: helping students build strong content knowledge through an increase in informational text; reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text; and regular practice with complex text and academic language.

Course activities include learning about these three major shifts reflected in the standards, viewing videos and reading articles related to the shifts, and applying this learning to practice. A course portfolio provides an opportunity to revisit key ideas, strategies, and reflections during and after the course.

Goals & Purpose

Session 1 – Introduction to the ELA/Literacy Standards

- Understand why the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were developed
- Learn how the English Language Arts (ELA)/Literacy Standards are structured
- Identify the major instructional shifts represented by the Standards
- Take stock of current level of comfort with and understanding of the CCSS in ELA/Literacy
- Watch videos, hear from the authors of the CCSS, and read about their development
- Reflect on current practices in ELA/Literacy

Session 2 – Building Strong Content Knowledge

- Understand the rationale for the shift towards increased informational text
- Identify specific standards that support the shift
- Learn how students benefit from learning how to read informational texts
- Recognize the use of comprehension strategies for reading informational text
- Read about and reflect on the shift towards rich, informational texts
- Unpack and apply a reading anchor standard
- Explore resources for teaching with informational text

Session 3 – Valuing Evidence

- Recognize the importance of reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text
- Learn how this instructional shift connects to the ELA/literacy Anchor Standards in reading, writing, and speaking
- Learn what classrooms look like when students demonstrate evidence-based literacy skills
- Observe and analyze teacher instruction and student learning of text-based evidence
- Explore the connection between Anchor Standards and grade-level skills
- Apply text-dependent questions to a text that is taught

Session 4 – Demonstrating Independence with Complex Text

- Understand the rationale for the shift towards increased practice with reading complex text
- Learn how to measure text complexity
- Identify the role of academic vocabulary in text complexity
- Learn how to recognize academic and discipline-specific vocabulary in content area texts
- Observe classroom instruction of students reading complex texts and the scaffolds available to them
- Apply knowledge of academic vocabulary and text complexity to a text from class

Session 5 – Pulling It All Together

- Review information and/or activities completed in earlier sessions
- Reflect on strategies for supporting students in meeting the ELA/Literacy Standards
- Take stock of what has been learned about the standards and shifts and the comfort level with implementing them in the classroom

Throughout the course, opportunities are provided for teachers to connect their learning across sessions and to explicitly consider the implications of that learning for classroom practice. Teachers will also be able to revisit their work and reflections by viewing their individual Course Portfolios.