



Common Core Self-Assessment Tool Higher Education & Teacher Preparation Faculty

by Ross Wiener and Candice McQueen, June 2014

Introduction to the Self-Assessment Tool: English-Language Arts and Literacy

The Common Core State Standards articulate learning objectives for students in grades K-12 in mathematics and literacy. More than 40 states and Washington, DC have adopted these academic standards, making the vast majority of prospective teachers responsible for teaching them. Common Core standards represent a paradigm shift for teaching and learning in K-12 in several significant ways, presenting an exciting and challenging opportunity to improve education in broad and deep ways.

Teacher preparation programs have a special opportunity and responsibility to integrate Common Core into the experience and instruction of aspiring teachers so that new teachers can successfully use the Common Core to improve student learning. *This self-assessment tool was developed specifically to assist higher education faculty in exploring the extent to which Common Core is reflected in the content and instruction of teacher preparation courses.*

What distinguishes Common Core standards? First, the standards are explicitly aimed at preparing *all* students for success in postsecondary education and career pursuits. In practical terms, this means an emphasis on developing students' critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and communication skills. These higher-level expectations are vital for making education outcomes more equitable, but many aspiring teachers have not benefitted from these expectations or experiences in their own education. Teacher preparation must cover the content of Common Core while at the same time modeling instruction that helps teachers understand and achieve Common Core expectations.

Second, Common Core standards are relatively brief compared to prior standards and written in clear, concise language. If you have not had the opportunity to read the standards for yourself, that's an important first step to using this guide because nothing can substitute for direct knowledge of the actual standards. Tomorrow's teachers enter a profession that is governed by the Common Core; responsibility for preparing these teachers demands familiarity with these foundational standards.

After becoming familiar with the standards, this self-assessment can assist you in determining if you have considered the full depth and breadth of the standards as it impacts both *what* you teach and *how* you teach aspiring teachers. This tool can be used for collaboration and conversation with colleagues, as a springboard for professional learning with faculty or as an individual self-assessment for specific courses.

The Common Core self-assessment tool has been designed to assess three different aspects of teacher preparation programming: This set of question is designed for a self-assessment of Common Core English-Language Arts and other courses that must integrate literacy instruction. There also are two additional documents with reflection questions designed for courses preparing teachers for Mathematics and another set of self-assessment questions that allow faculty who teach introductory teacher preparation courses to assess their integration of the Common Core standards.

Completing this self-assessment and exploring the implications with colleagues can establish a lead role for teacher preparation in making the vision of Common Core a reality. The questions are offered as an open-source resource for faculty in teacher preparation programs and are meant to be augmented, adapted and modified in ways that support inquiry and continuous improvement in preparing teachers.

Course Assessment: Preparing Teachers for Common Core English-Language Arts and Content Literacy Instruction

1. In which of the following ways are students exposed to Common Core standards (check all that apply):

- a. Applicable Common Core standards are included as course readings;
- b. Common Core standards are referred to in the syllabus and, as applicable, in lectures;
- c. There are course readings that discuss/explore the application of Common Core ELA standards to planning, instruction, and assessment;
- d. Some or all assignments include the expectation that students explicitly reference applicable Common Core standards in completing the assignment;
- e. All or almost all course readings are at or above end-of-high school expectations for text complexity (defined in Appendix A of Common Core ELA standards).

2. Give approximate average number of times per class students are expected to:

- a. Cite evidence from text when answering a question orally or in writing;
- b. Discuss material with each other in small or large groups;
- c. Make an oral presentation that integrates information from multiple sources clearly, concisely, logically appropriate to the purpose, audience and task ;
- d. Read a representation of instructional practice, or watch a video or role-playing exercise and refer to applicable Common Core standards in addressing issues that are raised;
- e. Complete a task employing strategic use of digital media that applies course learning to a practical problem of practice.

3. Which of the following aspects of writing are addressed in this course:

- a. Conducting research based on focused questions;
- b. Gathering evidence from multiple print and digital sources;
- c. Assessing credibility, accuracy, and relevance of source material in supporting a claim or argument;

- d. Using technology to collaborate with others in drafting, editing, and publishing writing;
 - e. Writing frequently for a range of audiences, tasks, and purposes.
4. Do students gain experience explaining/defending their reasoning and critiquing the reasoning of others? How are instructional strategies for fostering these practices examined in this course?
 5. How will students learn to apply the qualitative and quantitative inquiries regarding text complexity (defined in Appendix A of Common Core ELA Standards) to selecting instructional materials?
 6. Will students examine research regarding academic vocabulary and its role in learning? How will they learn strategies for reinforcing academic vocabulary instruction across content areas?
 7. In what ways do students in this course learn how to craft assignments and/or assessments that measure mastery of CCSS? How will students practice designing and critiquing rich tasks that (1) address multiple standards in reading and writing, (2) involve research using multiple sources, (3) explore cross-curricular connections, and (4) include a learning goal that is worthy of teachers' and students' time and effort?
 8. Do students learn about the texts required by Common Core ELA standards (i.e., Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address as high school texts) and the importance of complementing the Common Core with a well-developed, content-rich curriculum of literature and informational text? How are these topics addressed?
 9. How are released ELA assessment items from PARCC and Smarter-Balanced used to deepen understanding of Common Core expectations? Are students asked to gauge their readiness to teach to Common Core ELA with reference to expectations embedded in released assessment items?

This self-assessment tool was developed by **Ross Wiener**, vice president of the Aspen Institute, and **Dr. Candice McQueen**, Ph.D., Senior Vice President and Dean, College of Education, Lipscomb University; Dr. McQueen is also executive director of the Ayers Institute for Teacher Learning and Innovation.

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