



College and Career Readiness Standards-in-Action

Foundational
Unit

1

FACILITATOR GUIDE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS/LITERACY

CONNECTING THE CCR STANDARDS TO THE KEY ADVANCES

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Background and Purpose

The College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards for Adult Education in English Language Arts (ELA)/Literacy embody three key advances in instruction inspired by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). This unit provides an overview of all three advances: increasing text complexity, prioritizing evidence when reading and writing, and building knowledge. It introduces participants to the CCR Standards and articulates the connections between them, the key advances, and how they define college and career readiness.

While the research basis for each key advance will be examined in detail in the subsequent units, it is important to know the CCR Standards are a synthesis of the best elements of standards-related work to date and represent an important advance over previous standards. These standards are ambitious. They are anchored by empirical evidence of what employers and educators actually demand of prospective employees and students as determined from large-scale surveys of college faculty and employers¹ and information from a range of assessment results.²

¹ Data from national surveys, including ACT, Inc. 2009. *ACT National Curriculum Survey 2009*. Iowa City, IA: Author. Accessed November 30, 2011; Casner-Lotto, Jill, and Linda Barrington. 2006. *Are They Really Ready to Work?: Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century U.S. Workforce*. The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and Society for Human Resource Management. Accessed November 30, 2011; and Conley, David T., Kathryn V. Drummond, Alicia de Gonzalez, Jennifer Roseboom, and Odile Stout. 2011. *Reaching the Goal: The Applicability and Importance of the Common Core State Standards to College and Career Readiness*. Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC). Accessed February 20, 2013.

² Information from assessments, including ACT, Inc. 2011. *ACT COMPASS*. Accessed November 30, 2011; American Council on Education. n.d. *New GED® Test*. Accessed November 30, 2011; and The College Board. 2011. *ACCUPLACER*. Accessed November 30, 2011.

These findings and the standards produced in response to them are the impetus behind identifying three key advances in the ELA/Literacy CCR Standards for Adult Education. They frame the expectations for what is meant by college and career readiness. The ELA/literacy standards demand robust analytical reasoning and strong oral and written communication skills. They are designed to produce students who are close, attentive readers of high-quality complex text and who are able to use evidence and reason critically when writing and speaking.

The purpose of this first of four units then is to familiarize participants with the structure and demands of the CCR ELA/Literacy Standards. The unit provides opportunities for adult educators to connect the standards to the key instructional advances and see how they emerge from the CCR Standards. They also will see how the advances are connected tightly to one another and how together they will prepare adult learners for college and careers.

Overview

This unit will introduce participants to the CCR Standards for each of the five levels (A-E) and their links to the CCR Anchor Standards in each strand. During the first part of this unit (Naming the Standards), participants will closely read the ELA/Literacy Anchor Standards to identify and “name” their content. This exercise will give participants an opportunity to become familiar with the range of demands of the standards. Participants will record their work on the Naming the Standards worksheet.

Once the essence of each Anchor Standard has been identified, Part Two of this unit (Connecting the Standards to the Key Advances) will ask participants to work to connect the content of each Anchor Standard to one (or more) of the three key advances.

Participants will then reflect on how the college- and career-ready skills embedded within the four different strands of the CCR Standards (Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language) connect to one another and to each of the three advances.

Materials You Need

For Participants (Part One): Naming the Standards (one copy per participant):

- Directions for Participants
- Worksheet: Naming the Standards

For Participants (Part Two): Connecting the Standards to the Key Advances (one card per participant):

- Directions for Participants
- Resource: CCR Anchor Standards cards

For Facilitators:

- Unit 1 PowerPoint Presentation: Connecting the College and Career Readiness Standards to the Key Advances
- Answer Key: Naming the Standards

Time Frame to Complete the Unit

Allow **120 minutes** for this unit, using the following guidance to help divide the time:

- 15 minutes – Introduce the unit.
- 45 minutes – Work in pairs or small groups to complete the Naming the Standards activity.
- 45 minutes – Work as a whole group to complete the Connecting Standards to the Key Advances activity.
- 15 minutes – Discuss reflections.

Guidelines for Implementation

Step 1: Preparations for Part One and Part Two, Naming the Standards and Connecting the Standards to the Key Advances

- a) **Create small groups of participants, ideally with four to eight at each table.** The maximum size of a group for this session depends on your space, need, and comfort level. A guiding principle is to make sure the group is small enough that you can be in touch with each table of participants to determine whether they understand the concepts and are fully engaged or they are struggling and need more support.
- b) **For best results, select table leaders in advance or ask each table of participants during the session to choose one person to be their lead.** The table leader will be responsible for keeping track of time, bringing participants together at the appropriate times, making certain participants are moving along, sharing information at appropriate times, and notifying you when there are questions or the group needs more support. (If table leaders are selected in advance, provide them with copies of the PowerPoint Presentation, handouts, and answer key so they can prepare for the session.)
- c) **As a general strategy, be prepared to circulate around the room when participants are working individually or in pairs.** Circulating will allow you to check on their understanding and be readily available to answer questions. When participants are gathering by the four posters during Part Two of the unit, circulate to check on their understanding and be readily available to answer questions.
- d) **Prepare the materials for participants for Parts One and Two.** For Part One, copy the directions and the

Naming the Standards worksheet. For Part Two, prepare the Anchor Standards cards—one Anchor Standard per card. If you are going to use the Anchor Standards more than once, laminate the cards, and use different colors to represent the strands of Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. In addition, prepare the four posters on chart paper. Post the chart paper around the room—three that represent the key advances and one “other” category:

- Accessing Text Complexity
- Evidence
- Building Knowledge
- Other

e) **Become familiar with the PowerPoint Presentation and materials, including the answer key.** This will allow you to be at ease with the information and flow of the unit. Detailed notes are provided within the PowerPoint Presentation to help you prepare for the session. In particular, notes for each slide include the identification of the Big Idea, Facilitator Talking Points, and Facilitator Notes. These can help you frame your presentation and provide you important detail and context. This information is coupled with the information offered in this Facilitator Guide—including the research base, rationale, advice, and other guidelines—to give you the support and guidance you require.

The answer key is for your edification and is not meant to be handed out to participants. The key includes “right” answers, but not necessarily the only right answers; it includes well-supported judgments that will guide you as you reflect on participant questions and answers.

Step 2: Implementation of Part One, Naming the Standards (15 minutes to introduce; 45 additional minutes working in pairs or small groups)

Introduce the structure and meaning of the CCR Standards.

Slide 2: Provide participants with information on how the CCR Standards are organized before you have them actively engage in their own exploration of the standards and key advances. This includes the connection between the Anchor Standards and the level-specific standards that are organized into five levels: Levels A (Beginning Literacy), B (ABE 1), C (ABE 2), D (ABE 3), and E (ASE).

The CCR Anchor Standards and level-specific standards are necessary complements to one another. The CCR Anchor Standards provide broad standards, while the level-specific standards provide additional specificity. Together, they define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate to be prepared for college and careers.

Slides 3-4: Discuss with participants the three key advances in the CCR Standards and how they interact and build up to college and career readiness. The CCR Standards were developed to reflect and exemplify the three key advances of increasing text complexity, prioritizing evidence when reading and writing, and building knowledge.

It is critical to help teachers understand how providing students with access to more complex texts will prepare their students for the rigors of college and career-level reading (a focus of Unit 2). At the same time, it is critical for teachers to understand the importance of evidence and asking students to return to the text to read closely (a focus of Unit 3).

Providing students with ways to delve into and re-examine a text through good questions affords students with the supports they need to comprehend the ideas and information contained within complex texts. Asking students to collect evidence while they read also contributes to their ability to learn from what they have read. Similarly,

well-crafted culminating writing assignments tied to content-rich texts can assist students in collecting and expanding their knowledge (a focus of Unit 4).

It is the interaction of these key advances within the CCR Standards as students move up the levels that will prepare adult learners for college and careers. When students engage with *complex text* and extract and employ *evidence* from those texts, they gain *knowledge*, enlarge their experience, and broaden their worldviews.

Slide 5: Present the objectives of the unit: 1) to become familiar with the standards, 2) to learn how tightly linked they are to one another, and 3) to understand how the standards are connected to the key advances. Let participants know that the point of the hands-on tasks is to give them time to get acquainted with and invested in the CCR Standards for their adult students.

Begin the hands-on activity of Naming the CCR Standards.

Slides 6-7: *Distribute the participants' materials for the Naming the Standards activity.* This includes directions for participants and the Naming the Standards worksheet.

Slide 8: *Provide directions to participants on how to complete the activity.* Be sure all instructions are clearly understood before turning the room over to participants to start the activity.

Encourage participants to tie the standards to what they already know, or to see the one element (e.g., text complexity) that unites the parts of a standard and may be novel in their experience.

Direct each table of participants to fill out one strand (Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, or Language)

of the CCR Anchor Standards. (If you have time, assign two strands to each table of participants.) Ask participants to work with a partner at their table.

TIP: If participants seem stuck on a given standard, ask them some questions to help them discern the meaning. It can also help to provide a frame by asking them to fill in the blank, “This is the _____ standard.” For example, “This is the vocabulary standard.”

Here are the directions to give participants:

1. Circle keywords in each Anchor Standard on the Naming the Standards worksheet before arriving at a nickname.
2. Assign a one- to five-word nickname for each standard assigned to you. Go with your gut regarding the essential heart of each standard, and don’t overthink your answer.
3. Compare notes at your table and discuss how each nickname does or does not capture the essence of its standard.

Slide 9: Bring the group together to check on participants’ understanding of the meaning of various Anchor Standards. Go over as many of the standards as you have time for. Be sure to address any standards that participants struggled with. Also, be sure to provide honest feedback on the nicknames that participants offer.

The answers do not have to match precisely the nicknames in the answer keys, but they should focus on the same key idea(s). It won’t help participants come to a better understanding of the CCR Standards if they leave the activity with misconceptions about a standard.

Step 3: Implementation of Part Two, Connecting Standards to the Key Advances (45 minutes working as a whole group)

Begin the hands-on activity of Connecting the Standards to the Key Advances.

Slides 10-11: *Randomly distribute an Anchor Standard card to each participant.* Introduce the four posters around the room that name the three key advances and the “other” category. The purpose of this activity is to show how the three key advances come from the standards and connect to one another.

Slide 12: *Provide directions to participants on how to complete the activity.* Once participants have sorted themselves and their standards into one of the four groups, ask participants to share why they think this category is a standard’s best fit. Ask participants to see if others agree with their reasons for placing their standard in the group they have selected.

Suggest that participants move their standard to another category only when they are convinced after conversations with others that there is a better alignment with one of the other advances (recognizing that in many cases a standard relates to more than one key advance).

1. Read your Anchor Standards card. Look at the four categories posted around the room, and ask yourself, “Which key advance does this standard best illustrate or exemplify?”
2. When you have settled on which category your standard *best* fits, walk over to stand by that poster.
3. Read your standard aloud to the other participants and listen to their standard.

Slide 13: *Process the activity with participants.* Once the participants are sorted into groups and have shared their standards with one another, pose the following questions to the whole group:

- What do you notice about the colors of the cards in your key advance? *There should be a mix of colors represented in each advance.*

- Can you figure out what the colors represent? *They represent the four strands of ELA/literacy.*
- What are some rationales that explain why you chose to relate that standard to that key advance? *Answers will vary but should focus on a key advance's presence in a particular standard.*
- Did anyone have a hard time deciding which group to pick? *Give credit for anyone who did! The fact is this was hard to do since in many cases the standards relate to several of the advances.*
- Did anybody wonder about being part of another group? What key advances were the contenders? *Answers will vary but are important in exploring participants' insights.*
- How about those of you in the “other” category? What standard do you have? Why did you choose to stand under the “other” sign? *Answers may vary but should focus on the idea that some standards might fit under all the advances.*
- Does anyone from the other advances want to adopt them? If so, make a case for why that standard belongs there. *This should be a lighthearted exchange to conclude the standing part of the unit.*

Reflections: Thinking Back and Looking Forward (15 minutes)

Slide 14: Summarize the unit by explaining how each of the three advances draws on all four strands, representing the tightly interwoven nature of the CCR Standards for ELA/Literacy for adults.

In many ways, the first and last CCR Reading Standards operate as twin pillars that support the rest of the CCR Standards. They play a special role because they operate whenever students are reading, researching, or writing and speaking about what they have read.

Reading Standard 10 defines the range and complexity of what students need to read (Key Advance 1). Reading Standard 1 outlines the command of evidence required to support any analysis of text (Key Advance 2). No standard is fully met unless students are reading a text of sufficient complexity and they can provide evidence to support their understanding.

Note too that although the reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language standards are articulated separately, these divisions are made for the sake of clarity and manageability. In instruction the processes should be tightly interrelated and reciprocal: Students take in information through reading and listening, and share what they have learned through writing and discussion.

Pause here to give participants time to ask questions they have concerning the structure and focus of the CCR Standards for ELA/Literacy.

Slide 15: After participants complete the hands-on activity, ask them to reflect on and then discuss what they have learned. Ask them how they plan to use what they have learned.

Below are some questions for participants' reflections about their next steps:

- How has participating in this activity changed your thinking about the CCR Standards?
- How will you use the information and understanding you have acquired to improve your teaching practice and student learning?

- What additional training and tools would strengthen your ability to do so?

Once participants have a firm understanding of how the standards are organized and connected to the three key advances, the next priority is to introduce adult educators to text complexity and the central role it plays in the CCR Standards for Adult Education. This is accomplished by analyzing the characteristics of texts in Unit 2, Selecting Texts Worth Reading.