



# Literacy Links

October 2011  
Volume 8, Number 3

Monthly E-Newsletter of  
Maine Department of Education



The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts (ELA) has four strands: reading, writing, listening & speaking, and language. When compared to the Maine Learning Results for ELA at the K-5 grade span, the writing strand of the CCSS contains some of the most dramatic differences. During the next few months, *Literacy Links* will focus on aspects of the CCSS Writing strand, instructional implications, and potential resources to support instruction. This month, foundational concepts that underpin the Writing standards are considered.

## Spotlight on...

### *Foundations of Writing in the Common Core State Standards*

The Writing Standards in the Common Core are built on the premise that students need to use writing as a way of:

- Offering and supporting opinions,
- Demonstrating understanding of what they are studying; and
- Conveying real and imagine experiences and events.

The standards promote students' understanding that writing offers an opportunity to communicate to an external audience through a variety of forms for a variety of purposes. Additionally, writing is viewed as a vehicle that helps students build knowledge about a variety of topics. Central to the writing standards is the need for students to devote considerable time to writing throughout the school year, producing numerous pieces in both short and extended time frames (CCSS, 2010, pg. 18).

Keeping the above ideas in mind, there are several foundational concepts on which teachers should focus as they unpack the writing standards and begin to align their instruction.

#### **Thinking Strategies**

Reading researcher Mike Perfetti (1985) describes comprehension as "thinking guided by print". Extrapolating from his definition, writing might be defined as "thinking conveyed by print". With this in mind, Ellin Keene (2002) advocates a set of thinking strategies that proficient

"Writing, to me, is simply thinking through my fingers."  
~Isaac Asimov





“All children need literature. Children who are authors need it even more.  
~Donald Graves



learners use, whether they are reading or writing. The nature of writing requires careful thinking about:

- Determining what is important in the text
- Drawing inferences
- Using prior knowledge
- Asking questions
- Monitoring meaning and comprehension
- Using fix up strategies
- Synthesizing information
- Using sensory images

As you examine the CCSS for Writing, you will notice these thinking strategies are embedded within the standards.

### **Mentor Texts**

Knowing that writing requires thinking like readers, Katie Wood Ray and Matt Glover (2011) advocate that, “Our job as teachers is to help children discover how what they are reading and studying is like what they are trying to write.” The CCSS for Writing are highly connected to the texts that students are reading and the topics they are studying. As a result, texts that students read become mentors to their work as writers. When preparing for writing instruction, educators should give careful attention to the use of mentor texts that help learners connect reading and writing in productive ways. The concept of mentor texts is described in greater detail in the *Instructional Idea* section below.

### **Range of Writing**

Foundational to the CCSS for Writing is the expectation that students will write frequently for a wide variety of purposes and audiences. Students should be engaged in writing for a shorter as well as extended time periods, depending on their purpose. Further, there is an expectation that writing is a means to improving comprehension of what they are reading and studying about.

### **Integration with Other ELA Strands**

While there is a specific set of writing standards in the CCSS, educators would be remiss if they only attended to these standards as they align their writing curriculum. The design of the CCSS for ELA expects educators to integrate the standards contained in the four strands to support overall ELA instruction. As a result, when studying the writing standards, educators will need to pay close attention to not only the 10 writing standards, but also to the standards in the Language strand (e.g. vocabulary and conventions), the Reading strand (e.g. writing to comprehend and foundational skills), and the Listening and Speaking strand (e.g. composing ideas and providing feedback).

### **Writing Process Structures**

Finally, while the CCSS for Writing do not advocate particular instructional frameworks, there are expectations embedded within the Writing standards, as well as within the other ELA strands of reading, listening and speaking, and language, that should direct educator’s attention to particular instructional components. In general terms, these components include direct instruction that includes both modeling and guided practice opportunities, time for independent writing and small group instruction, and opportunities for students to share their writing to receive feedback through writing conferences and from larger audiences.

In the coming months, *Literacy Links* will examine specific CCSS writing



“I always say, if you do three things only when you teach writing to children, make sure it’s these: Model, model, and model some more.”  
~Megan Sloan



standards in greater detail. As these standards are detailed, keep these foundational aspects in mind.

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## Online Instructional Resources...

The online links listed below offer resources related to the foundations on which the CCSS for Writing are based.

### Common Core State Standards Videos

The Hunt Institute and the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) have developed a series of video vignettes that describe and explain the Common Core State Standards. In the video link below, the key Standards writers talk about two significant aspects of the CCSS writing standards: types of writing and writing conventions.

#### *Types of Writing*

[http://www.youtube.com/user/TheHuntInstitute#p/u/6/Jt\\_2jI010WU](http://www.youtube.com/user/TheHuntInstitute#p/u/6/Jt_2jI010WU)

#### *Writing Conventions*

[http://www.youtube.com/user/TheHuntInstitute#p/u/12/zoeh0r1Qe\\_k](http://www.youtube.com/user/TheHuntInstitute#p/u/12/zoeh0r1Qe_k)

### Developmental Progressions for Writing

This link will take you to the CCSS Writing Standards organized by standards across the K-12 span.

[http://www.maine.gov/education/lres/ela/documents/ELA\\_Break-Down/ccss-writing\\_811.pdf](http://www.maine.gov/education/lres/ela/documents/ELA_Break-Down/ccss-writing_811.pdf)

### Alignment of Writing Standards Across Grade Levels

This link will take you to the CCSS Writing Standards organized by grade level.

[http://www.maine.gov/education/lres/ela/documents/ccss\\_writing.pdf](http://www.maine.gov/education/lres/ela/documents/ccss_writing.pdf)

### International Reading Association’s *Common Core Collaborative Community*

For educators who are members of the International Reading Association, IRA has developed an online learning community focused on the Common Core State Standards for ELA. You can enroll by using the web link listed below. This community includes opportunities to network with other educators and to access resources that support the implementation of the CCSS.

<http://engage.reading.org/directory/collaborativecommunities/commoncorestatestandardsinitiative/>

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### USM Professional Development Center

Fall 2011 Courses  
and Workshops

[www.usm.maine.edu  
/pdc](http://www.usm.maine.edu/pdc)



## Instructional Idea...

### Mentor Texts

Helping writers study the craft of writing is an important scaffold for improving their writing. One of the most direct ways in which students can study the craft of writing is through the use of mentor texts. Mentor texts demonstrate what good writing looks like, providing models that students can emulate by showing them clear examples. Mentor texts can take many forms, such as picture books, excerpts from book chapters, magazine or newspaper articles, editorials, or poetry. Generally, mentor texts are short pieces that can be reread multiple times in order to study the writing more fully.

When choosing mentor texts that support writing development, it is helpful to examine them with three categories in mind....*ideas, structures, and craft*. Some mentor texts can inspire writers to find ideas for their own writing, other mentor texts offer structures that writers can learn to apply themselves, and still other mentor texts demonstrate particular writing techniques (sentence structures, use of description, etc.). Some texts can be used to explore all three of these categories, while others lend themselves better to just one category. Work toward building a collection of mentor texts that you and your students will want to return to repeatedly, that represent a variety of genres and styles, and that students can access independently after you've introduced them to the text. Some examples of mentor text lessons can be found at the following website maintained by Corbett Harrison, a writing instruction professional developer:

<http://corbettharrison.com/mentortext.html#1>

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## Summary of Professional Texts...

The following texts offer resources to support the Common Core State Standards for Writing

[Writing Sense: Integrated Reading and Writing Lessons for English Language Learners K-8](#) by Juli Kendall and Outey Khuon (Stenhouse, 2006, ISBN #: 1-57110-442-9).

In this helpful text, Kendall and Khuon apply Ellin Keene's "Thinking Strategies for Proficient Learners" to writing instruction and model how to connect this to ongoing comprehension instruction in reading. Their text describes how to build the classroom conditions necessary for writing instruction, attending to both writing workshop and small-group instructional structures. Additionally, the text offers classroom tested lessons across K-8 for children at all levels of language acquisition. Many mentor text suggestions are offered as well.

## 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Literacy Connections Conference

*Children  
Succeed When  
Parents Succeed*

Thursday, March  
29, 2012  
8:30-3:30  
Thomas College

More Info:  
[www.mainefamilyliteracy.com](http://www.mainefamilyliteracy.com)



[Study Driven: A Framework for Planning Units of Study in the Writing Wrokshop](#) by Katie Wood Ray (Heinemann, 2006, ISBN #: 978-0-325-00750-2).

In this engaging text, Katie Wood Ray describes how to foster deep-study of mentor texts to promote better understanding of writing traits and genres. Through use of deep study, students can come to recognize these traits more readily and utilize them as tools to planning their own writing. Other texts by Katie Wood Ray that complement this text include [About the Authors: Writing Workshop with Our Youngest Learners](#) (Ray and Cleavland, 2004) and [Already Ready: Nurturing Writers in Preschool and Kindergarten](#) (Ray and Glover, 2008).

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## Children's Literature...

### [The Wolf Who Cried Boy](#)

By Bob Hartman

(G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2002, ISBN # 0-399-23578-7)

[The Wolf Who Cried Boy](#) is a wonderful twist on a classic Aesop's Fable, and can serve as a terrific mentor text that provides a model of a fractured fairy tale. Readers will chuckle as they embark on an adventure with Little Wolf as he tries to side track his parents into feeding him more exciting meals made from humans by calling out "Boy! Boy!". Find out how long his trickery lasts!

### [Meanwhile](#)

By Jules Feiffer

(Harper Trophy, 1997, ISBN # 978-0062059338)

In this engaging adventure tale, young Raymond ingeniously finds a way to use the "Meanwhile....." convention he's discovered through his comic book collection to avoid doing what his mother is asking. Join him on his adventures and see if he can problem solve when "Meanwhile" fails him! This comic book-like text provides excellent examples of how to find ideas for writing adventures through a mentor text.

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## University of Maine

### Notebook Savvy: Taking a Close Look Inside the Reading and Writing Notebooks

Presented by  
**Aimee Buckner**  
The Lovett School,  
Atlanta, GA

May 10, 2012, 9:00-3:00  
p.m.

Wells Conference Center  
University of Maine,  
Orono

Contact:  
[Amy.Cates@umit.maine.edu](mailto:Amy.Cates@umit.maine.edu)

## Content Area Strategy...

### Shared Reading

When assisting students to unlock content area reading, a useful strategy is the practice of shared reading. Like reading aloud, shared reading enables teachers to provide support for the reading of content related text, but it also enables students to see the text while it is being read and to read along with the teacher either orally or silently. Shared reading provides a bridge between read aloud and independent reading (Holdaway, 1982), as well as opportunity for students to build fluency by hearing a more skilled reader while they study the text's punctuation, layout, phrase boundaries, and other cues (Allen, 2001). Additionally, shared reading offers opportunity for modeling specific reading strategies related to comprehension and vocabulary, as well as explaining features of the text, all within the context of the reading. It is important that students understand the purpose of the shared reading experience, and that teachers are explicit about what they are teaching and how students will apply this in future reading.

When selecting texts to use for shared reading, there are several considerations to keep in mind (Fisher and Frey, 2008):

- Choose texts that exemplify the reading strategy and/or text feature on which instruction will focus;
- Select text that is at students' independent or instructional level; and
- Use short pieces (a few paragraphs or a page) of text that can be projected by an overhead projector or copied so that students can mark up the text.

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## News from Maine's English Language Arts Team...

### English Language Arts Webinar Series 2011-12

The Maine Department of Education's ELA Division is sponsoring a series of webinars during the 2011-12 school year focusing on a variety of aspects of the CCSS for ELA. The following is a list of the topics and dates announced so far:

Date	Topic
October 18	ELA Website Guided Tour, <b>Now Archived at:</b> <a href="http://www.maine.gov/education/lres/ela/online_pd.html">http://www.maine.gov/education/lres/ela/online_pd.html</a>

**SNEAK PREVIEW**  
**IN 2011-12**  
**Literacy Links—**

*WRITNG*  
*Online Literacy*  
*Modules*  
*Comprehension*  
*Intervention*



November 1	Common Core State Standards for Writing, Grades K-5
November 9	Common Core State Standards for Reading, Grades 6-12
December (Date TBA)	Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Content Specifications for Summative Assessment
January 11	Literacy Modules for K-5
January 25	Common Core State Standards for Writing, Grades 6-12
February	Student Constructed Response data and instructional implications
March	Speaking and Listening
April/May	Taking Stock; finding and filling the holes in curriculum and instruction
Summer 2012	Summer Institute – Implementing the Common Core State Standards

**For more information about these webinars, go to:**  
[http://www.maine.gov/education/lres/ela/online\\_pd.html](http://www.maine.gov/education/lres/ela/online_pd.html).

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We still want your suggestions! As you peruse the monthly editions of *Literacy Links*, you might have topic ideas for the spotlight, instructional strategy, children’s literature, professional text, or web site resource sections. We’d love to hear your suggestions. Please email them to: [Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov](mailto:Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov).

**For additional information about any of the items in this newsletter or to sign up to receive this e-newsletter, please email**  
[Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov](mailto:Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov)

**Click here to view back editions of *Literacy Links***  
<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/newsletters/index.html>

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