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Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding the challenges and successes in implementing the new literacy standards. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the ten regional educational laboratories (REL) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. It provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations on research based education questions.

The information below represents the most rigorous research available. Researchers consider the type of methodology and give priority to research reports that employ well described and thorough methods. The resources were also selected based on the date of the publication with a preference for research from the last ten years. Additional criteria for inclusion include the source and funder of the resource.

**Question:** *What is the greatest challenge for schools in implementing the new literacy challenges? What is the key practice that exists for schools that are successful implementing these standards vs those that aren't?*

**Key words and search strings used in the search:** *challenges in implementing AND new CCSS literacy standards OR new literacy standards; 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy standards; implementing new literacy standards; successful implementation of AND new literacy standards*

**Search databases and websites:**

1. ERIC: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>
2. JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/action/showAdvancedSearch>
3. Google Scholar: [www.google.com/scholar](http://www.google.com/scholar)
4. Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Resources: <http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/>
5. What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

**Results:**

Based on the database searches described above, there were no causal studies on this topic. Below are some related articles and resources to guide your search for information pertinent to your question.

**Citations Retrieved: (NOTE: Abstracts and executive summaries are copied directly from the reports when possible to ensure accuracy):**

Alberti, S. (2012-2013). Making the shifts. *Educational Leadership*, 70(4), 24-27.

**Abstract/Summary:** Over the last two years, the author has talked with thousands of educators about the Common Core State Standards, and she has realized that one of the biggest risks they currently face is full-speed implementation without an understanding of the changes that the standards require. When a new reform initiative comes around, the instinct of teachers and education leaders is often to buy new tools to support the work. But in a time when the market is

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offering an enormous range of materials, educators need a secure understanding of the standards so that they can choose their resources wisely. As they put the standards into practice, it is important to focus on a few shifts that have the most significant effect on students. These shifts should guide all aspects of implementing the standards--including professional development, assessment design, and curriculum. When educators attend to three core shifts in English language arts and literacy as well as in mathematics, the expectations for teaching and learning will be clear, consistent, and tightly aligned to the goals of the standards.

Goldman, S. R., & Lee, C. D. (2014). Text complexity: State of the art and the conundrums it raises. *The Elementary School Journal*, 115(2), 290-300. doi: 10.1086/678298

**Abstract/Summary:** Standards for literacy in the twenty-first century raise the bar on the complexity of texts and the tasks for which they are used. The strengths and limitations of contemporary approaches to text complexity are discussed with respect to major points raised in the six articles in this special issue. In addition, four features of text that are of central importance for reading to learn disciplinary content are discussed: topic complexity, genre and function, word-level indicators, and task complexity. We argue that if we are to ascertain sources of complexity and challenge when readers engage with text for purposes of accomplishing interpretive and explanatory levels of understanding, we will need to take into account text, task, and reader situated in sociocultural contexts of schools and communities.

Schmoker, M. & Jago, C. (2013). Simplifying the ELA common core: Demystifying the curriculum. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 49(2), 59-63. doi: 10.1080/00228958.2013.786589

**Abstract/Summary:** The English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards ([CCSS], 2010) could have a transformational effect on American education. Though the process seems daunting, one can begin immediately integrating the essence of the ELA Common Core in every subject area. This article shows how one could implement the Common Core and create coherent, literacy-rich curriculum across such disciplines as English and language arts, science, math, art, music and other performance-oriented electives. (Contains 2 figures.)

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (2011). *Address new, rigorous core state standards through English/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and career/technical courses. High schools that work.* (Newsletter #11v20w). Retrieved from: [http://publications.sreb.org/2011/11V20w\\_BestPractices\\_Address\\_New\\_Rigorous\\_Standards.pdf](http://publications.sreb.org/2011/11V20w_BestPractices_Address_New_Rigorous_Standards.pdf)

**Abstract/Summary:** The Common Core State (or other rigorous) Standards (CCSS) being implemented by states across the nation are prompting school leaders and teachers to seek ways to move the standards into classroom instruction, assignments and assessments. Schools wanting to

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ensure that student work meets grade-level standards are using differentiated instructional strategies to enable students, particularly challenged students, to meet the new standards. This issue presents examples of CCSS implemented at several schools.

Williamson, G. L., Fitzgerald, J., & Stenner, A.J. (2013). The common core state standards' quantitative text complexity trajectory: Figuring out how much complexity is enough. *Educational Researcher*, 42(2), 59-69. doi: 10.3102/0013189X12466695

**Abstract/Summary:** The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) set a controversial aspirational, quantitative trajectory for text complexity exposure for readers throughout the grades, aiming for all high school graduates to be able to independently read complex college and workplace texts. However, the trajectory standard is presented without reference to how the grade-by-grade complexity ranges were determined or rationalized, and little guidance is provided for educators to know how to apply the flexible quantitative text exposure standard in their local contexts. We extend and elaborate the CCSS presentation and discussion, proposing that decisions about shifting quantitative text complexity levels in schools requires more than implementation of a single, static standard. A rigorous two-part analytical strategy for decision making surrounding the quantitative trajectory standard is proposed, a strategy that can be used by state policy makers, district officials, and educators in general. First, borrowing methods from student growth modeling, we illustrate an analytical method for creation of multiple trajectories that can lead to the CCSS end-of-high-school target for text complexity exposure, resulting in trajectories that place greater burden for shifting text complexity levels on students in different grades. Second, we submit that knowledge of the multiple possibilities, in conjunction with a set of guiding principles for decision making, can support educators and policy makers in critiquing and using the CCSS quantitative standard for text complexity exposure to establish particular expectations for quantitative text complexity exposure for particular students in situ.

Zhang, S. (2014). New teachers' implementation of the Common Core State Standards. *Action in Teacher Education*, 36-(5-6), 465-479. doi: 10.1080/01626620.2014.977745

**Abstract/Summary:** This study investigates new teachers' challenges in implementing the secondary mathematics and English Common Core State Standards (CCSS) using a survey approach that addressed 17 secondary mathematics and English teachers' understanding and implementation of the CCSS and their needs for collaboration with peers in a positive learning community. The findings included new teachers' perspectives about their lack of preparedness and their challenges in understanding the CCSS language, content, and student learning. The teachers also reported difficulties in working with veteran teachers. The teachers described needing preparation during their teacher education programs; collaboration among teachers of similar content areas, programs, and schools; and professional development and support from administrators.

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Zygouris-Coe, V. I. (2012). Disciplinary literacy and the common core state standards. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 32(1) 35-50. doi: 10.1097/TLD.0b013e31824561a2

**Abstract/Summary:** The purpose of this article is to present a perspective on disciplinary literacy and the Common Core State Standards based on the argument that disciplinary literacy is embedded in the standards. The article highlights possibilities and challenges associated with national efforts to prepare students for success in college and the workforce. Information is presented on the basis of a selected literature review of disciplinary literacy, adolescent literacy, student achievement, and the common core standards. Instructional strategies also are presented for developing students' disciplinary literacy and meeting common core goals. In the article, I call for collaborative inquiry and shared accountability among stakeholders to ensure that all students' literacy and learning needs are met in a new era of educational reform.

## **Referrals**

### **Organizations:**

- Achieve the Core: <http://achievethecore.org/>
- Core Standards: [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)
- Literacy Design Collaborative: [www ldc.org](http://www ldc.org)
- National Literacy Project: [www.nationalliteracyproject.org](http://www.nationalliteracyproject.org)
- Alliance for Excellent Education: <http://www.all4ed.org>
- Center on Instruction: <http://www.centeroninstruction.org/>
- Council of Chief State School Officers: <http://www.ccsso.org/>
- Council of the Great City Schools: <http://www.cgcs.org/Page/1>

### **Federally Funded Resources:**

- Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation: <http://csai-online.org/>
- Institute of Education Sciences (IES), public search engine available at: <http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/>
- What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

### ***Disclaimer:***

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