

# Pedagogy and the CCSS

## WHAT VERSUS HOW TO TEACH

The Common Core State Standards spell out for teachers what their students must learn in order to be authentically literate. By focusing on the capacities of students, the CCSS does not advocate one particular pedagogical approach over another for achieving these goals. Teachers are given wide latitude to exercise their professional judgment in how they assist children in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to read and write effectively and think critically about what they hear and believe. In short, the purpose of the standards is not to specify how teachers should teach, but rather identify what all students are expected to learn from their teachers such that they will achieve college and career readiness.

## KEY STUDENT CAPACITIES AND THE CCSS

While the College and Career Ready Standards of the CCSS specify explicit criteria regarding what teachers should focus on at each grade level, they also include a portrait of the capacities teachers should be fostering in their students over the course of a K-12 education to help them emerge as truly literate adults in the 21st century:

**INDEPENDENCE:** Teachers should empower students to grasp the meaning and purpose of complex texts and render sophisticated critical judgments about their content. The goal of instruction is to guide students in becoming self-directed learners who are able to read, write, listen, and share ideas with others effectively.

**UNDERSTANDING:** Teachers should steer students in reading complex texts with the aim of developing their general knowledge base as well as acquire discipline specific proficiencies. They should show students how prioritizing relevant evidence when reading, writing, researching, and speaking increases their comprehension of the material under study.

**AWARENESS:** Teachers should instruct students in how to modulate their responses to tasks based on the audience, task, purpose, and discipline. They should promote a willingness to entertain new ideas in their students, while simultaneously sharpening their critical thinking skills to question the validity of the evidence others offer.

**ADEPTNESS:** Teachers should aid students in learning how to use technology thoughtfully and strategically to enhance their understanding.

**TOLERANCE:** Teachers should foster in students a desire to learn about and appreciate the differences in backgrounds, outlooks, and experiences of their classmates and others.

## EXPECTATIONS FOR TEACHERS

Because students vary widely in their abilities, needs, learning rates, and achievement levels, the CCSS does not mandate particular intervention methods for above or below grade level students—nor specific supports for English language learners or students with special needs. What the standards do instead is specify a common set of high expectations that all teachers are held accountable for teaching.

The CCCSS specifies that teachers should prepare students to perform close reading that extracts evidence in order to identify key points in complex informational text and grasp the core meaning of works of literature. Teachers must engage students by exposing them to a wide range of texts of all types and genres in order to build their knowledge base and broaden their horizons. Teachers must cultivate in their charges the ability to think critically and argue cogently using evidence in order to engender a sense of personal and civic responsibility. Ultimately teachers are responsible for ensuring that their students emerge from their classrooms with the reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills that will allow them to engage in meaningful conversations and purposefully express themselves in college, the workplace, and society.