

State Superintendent Tony Evers
Joint Hearing of Select Committees on the Common Core State Standards
Fond Du Lac City/County Building, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin
Wednesday, October 16, 2013

My name is Tamara Maxwell, and I am the English Language Arts Consultant at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). With me today is Emilie Amundson, Director of the Common Core State Standards Team at DPI. I would like to thank the chairs and the committee for the opportunity to speak today on Wisconsin's academic standards. During your first hearing, you heard school district after school district articulate why the Common Core State Standards are the best standards for Wisconsin, and I'm here to tell you from my place of English expertise that I agree; they raise expectations for student learning, articulate clearly what students need to know and be able to do, and provide grade-level specificity.

Today, I will share from my experience as a teacher and teacher-leader, member of the English Language Arts Standards Leadership Team from 2008-2011, and my current role at the Department of Public Instruction, which I began in 2012.

When I first started teaching English at Kimberly High School in Kimberly, Wisconsin, I was filled with excitement at the promise of helping students develop their potential. I had just earned my teaching certification from Lawrence University, where I gained expertise practice through coursework and practical experience in classrooms in the Fox Valley.

Since our district was working with the Model Academic Standards at that time, which only has six content standards, we had to devote a large portion of our district professional learning time to identifying what it was that students actually needed to know and be able to do at each grade. It was time-consuming work because there were multiple middle schools that fed into the high school, so the knowledge and skills of students entering ninth grade varied greatly. Without a clearly articulated set of expectations for students at each grade level, we ended up doing a lot of reteaching of the same content, and students moved onto the next grade with gaps because there was always too much material to cover.

As an English teacher, I worked with a diverse student population in a variety of English classes at each grade while co-teaching with a special education teacher. Due to the varying needs of our students, I often found myself frustrated because I wanted to spend more of my prep time learning about how to support my students, and yet, the time wasn't there because we were so focused on identifying *what* to teach that we never had time for the deep local discussion on *how* to teach our diverse students.

In 2008, I was asked by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to become a member of the English Language Arts Standards Leadership Team, a team of approximately 15 kindergarten through university level educators tasked with revising the Wisconsin standards for English language arts. This began a three-year process of research, discussion, drafting, revising, comparing standards across states and nations, and soliciting feedback from stakeholder groups.

As part of our teams' role, we reviewed multiple drafts of the Common Core State Standards, compared the Common Core State Standards to the Wisconsin standards framework we were working on and to the old Model Academic Standards, and provided feedback on the Common Core. As we went through this process, we recognized that each draft of the standards got better and better. We thought that the Common Core were rigorous, coherent, and specific,

digital texts in diverse media, formats, and lengths. Decisions about which texts will be used in the classroom are made by the people who know the students and community best – educators, parents, and community members within local districts. This approach was an important one to the teachers in Kimberly.

In my classroom, once we identified the texts students were going to read, we started the work of writing text-dependent questions, questions that require students to go back into the text to answer the questions. Text-dependent questions develop students' analytical thinking.

To give you a better picture of what this kind of lesson looked like in my classroom, we are going to do a close reading of a text with text-dependent questions. We will be addressing seven Common Core State Standards (RI1, RI2, RI3, RI4, RI10, SL1, and W9.) through this process, covering things like reading a text closely, determining central themes, and determining how word choices shape meaning and tone. I am going to read you a short excerpt from a text you may know, *The Winter Room* by Gary Paulsen. If any of you have had middle school students, then you might be familiar with Gary Paulsen's writing. While I am reading, settle back and take in the author's message conveyed through his use of strong sensory images.

Preface from *The Winter Room* By Gary Paulsen

If books could be more, could show more, could own more, this book would have smells... It would have the smells of old farms; the sweet smell of new-mown hay as it falls off the oiled sickle blade when the horses pull the mower through the field, and the sour smell of manure steaming in a winter barn. It would have the sticky-slick smell of birth when the calves come and they suck for the first time on the rich, new milk; the dusty smell of winter hay dried and stored in the loft waiting to be dropped down to the cattle; the pungent fermented smell of the chopped corn silage when it is brought into the manger on the silage fork... – but it can't.

Books can't have smells.

If books could be more and own more and give more, this book would have sound...

It would have the chewing sounds of cows in the barn working at their cuds on a long winter's night; the solid thinking sound of the ax coming down to split stovewood...– but it can't.

Books can't have sound...

If books could have more, give more, be more, show more, they would still need readers, who bring to them sound and smell and light and all the rest that can't be in books.

The book needs you.

After reading the passage, I would have encouraged my students to turn and talk with a partner, asking questions such as What did you notice? How did you feel? What do you wonder? Where did the author take you? The immediate goal is simply for students to understand what we read.

After a few minutes of discussion, I'd ask a few pairs to share their reactions. Once I felt that my students had an understanding of the text, then I'd have students analyze the text, using text-dependent questions. Students would support their ideas with textual evidence. I could have facilitated this part in a variety of ways to create engagement and provide access to learning. A few examples of text-dependent questions that would get my students thinking analytically about what they read might be:

- Which details develop the key idea?
- What effect does the sensory language have on the reader?
- What is the effect of the author's use of repetition on meaning?

I hope this brief exercise helped you to see how the standards simply provide for me the guidance for what my students needed to know and be able to do. The text I used, the way I structured my lesson, the questions I asked, the instructional strategies I used to make this lesson come alive for my unique students—that was all me working with my colleagues in my local district.

Now that I do this work at the state level, I use my position to help other English educators understand how they can use the standards to meet the needs of every student while still building from their expertise as a highly skilled professional.

1998
Wisconsin
Model
Academic
Standards
for ELA



Reading Content Standard

(same standard K-12th grade)

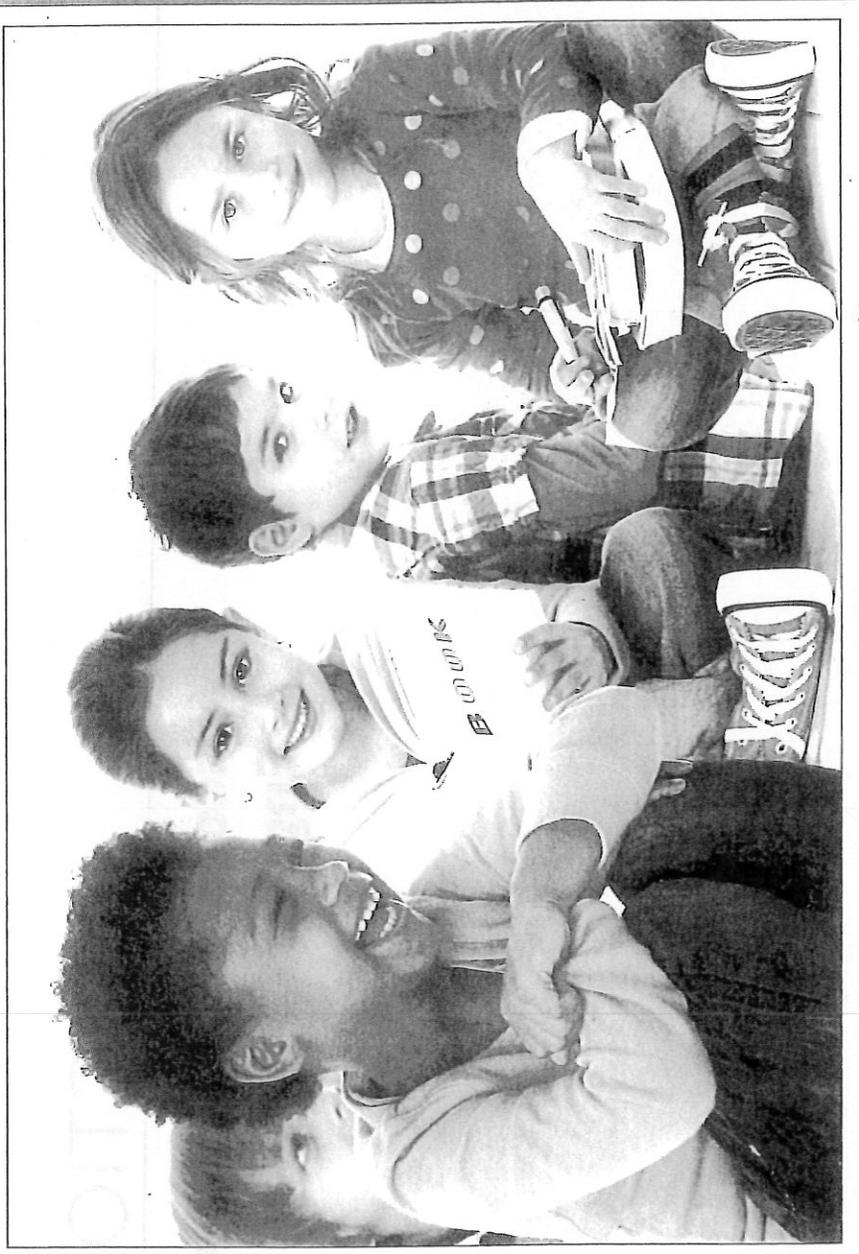
Read and respond to a wide range of writing to build an understanding of written materials, of themselves, and of others

One (of 26 total) **READING** standards from **Common Core State Standards for ELA**
Reading Foundational Skills: Focus on Phonics and Word Recognition (RF 3)

Grade	*Notice how phonics skills build on one another from kindergarten through 5 th grade.
K	<p>Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one letter-sound correspondences by producing the primary sound or many of the most frequent sounds for each consonant. • Associate the long and short sounds with the common spellings (graphemes) for the five major vowels. • Read common high-frequency words by sight (e.g., <i>the, of, to, you, she, my, is, are, do, does</i>). • Distinguish between similarly spelled words by identifying the sounds of the letters that differ.
1	<p>Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know the spelling-sound correspondences for common consonant digraphs. • Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words. • Know final -e and common vowel team conventions for representing long vowel sounds. • Use knowledge that every syllable must have a vowel sound to determine the number of syllables in a printed word. • Decode two-syllable words following basic patterns by breaking the words into syllables. • Read words with inflectional endings. • Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.
2	<p>Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish long and short vowels when reading regularly spelled one-syllable words. • Know spelling-sound correspondences for additional common vowel teams. • Decode regularly spelled two-syllable words with long vowels. • Decode words with common prefixes and suffixes. • Identify words with inconsistent but common spelling-sound correspondences. • Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.
3	<p>Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and know the meaning of the most common prefixes and derivational suffixes. • Decode words with common Latin suffixes. • Decode multi-syllable words. • Read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.
4	<p>Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to read accurately unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context and out of context.
5	<p>Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to read accurately unfamiliar multi-syllabic words in context and out of context.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS for

English Language Arts





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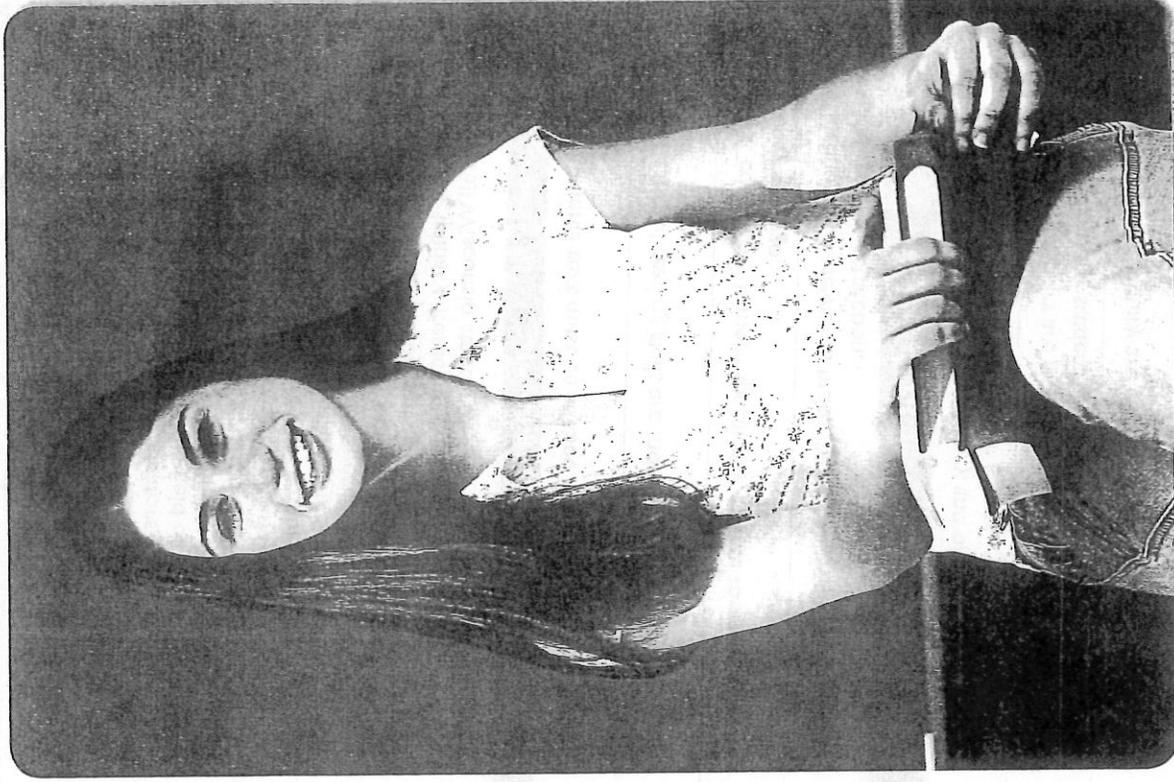
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Students Who are College and Career Ready in Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening and Language

The CCSS provide a portrait of students who have met the standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening and Language. The graphic below illustrates these qualities of a student who is proficient in the discipline. For more information on these dispositions, see page 7 of the CCSS standards.



Students in Wisconsin...

1. Demonstrate independence.
2. Build strong content and knowledge.
3. Respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose and discipline.
4. Comprehend as well as critique.
5. Value evidence.
6. Use technology and digital media strategically and capably.
7. Come to understand other perspectives and cultures.



How to use the CCSS Appendix Documents

The CCSS for English Language Arts include several appendix documents to assist in reading and understanding the standards. All appendix documents can be read and downloaded at <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>

English Language Arts Appendices A, B, and C provide clear definitions of various terminology:

Appendix A establishes consistent ways to discuss text complexity citing relevant research.

Appendix B shares exemplar texts.

Appendix C provides student writing samples to spur professional discussion and instructional decision-making.

Appendix A, B, and C should not be seen as establishing required text lists or providing sample writing prompts. Rather, use the appendix documents as tools to assist in building consistent understanding and expectations for selecting and using complex texts, diversifying text types for reading and writing, and building a ladder of increasingly sophisticated student writing.