

RESEARCH REPORT

Support for Teaching English Standards

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts require students to be able to read complex texts at or above grade level and for teachers to integrate literacy instruction with other subjects. The good news is, a large majority of English Language Arts (ELA) teachers feel prepared to help students meet the standards.

But what about non-ELA teachers? At least three-quarters of mathematics, science, and social studies teachers report that they are expected to address ELA standards in their instruction, although most are unfamiliar with the standards and feel ill-prepared to help students achieve them. That's according to a study by the RAND Corporation, "What Supports Do Teachers Need to Help Students Meet Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy?"

RAND's American Teacher Panel and American School Leader Panel periodically



survey a representative sample of teachers and principals across the U.S., and the findings from this report stem from a February 2015 survey.

While 90 percent of ELA teachers in Common Core states say they are

moderately or well-prepared to help students meet the standards, just 45 percent of their non-ELA colleagues report the same level of confidence. The survey of principals meanwhile found that administrators may be

MYTWOCENTS

What are your top tips for conducting home visits over summer break?



LaRhonda Mathies (@MsMathies): 1. Wear a shirt with the school name. 2. Have folders with back to school forms 3. Take a short student/parent interest and needs survey.



Bradley Carpenter (@Brad_Carpenter): Don't just visit the neighborhoods you are familiar with.



Jennifer Cox (@JenniferHCox): Leave "sorry we missed you" cards with contact info if no one is home.

**SPOTLIGHT ON
BEST PRACTICES**

Staff Relationships

To break the ice with staff upon my assignment as principal, I hosted a “Get To Know You” party at my house. I also regularly make sure that staff knows that “family is first” and make accommodations for staff to come late or leave early, if necessary, to attend to medical appointments or school programs for their own children. Each year, I show my appreciation for staff with personally made, opening day gifts correlated to our theme, a CD of Christmas music that I compile during the holidays, and a token of appreciation during “Staff Appreciation Week.”

—*Glen Stacho, principal of Drake Elementary School in Strongsville, Ohio*

One of my main points to staff members throughout the year is building relationships, not only with students, but also with parents and community members. I heavily stress to teachers that they communicate with parents about negative situations, but more importantly, regarding the positive happenings that are going on in the classrooms as well. Teachers are required to document parent contacts on a communication log, which they submit to me quarterly.

—*Brad Olinger, principal of Flandreau Elementary School in Flandreau, South Dakota*



overestimating the knowledge and skills non-ELA teachers possess to help students meet literacy standards: 69 percent of principals say such teachers are ready.

Implications for Professional Learning

The findings have professional development implications for school districts in CCSS states, as well as for non-CCSS states, such as Nebraska and Indiana, which have adopted new or revised ELA/literacy standards. The study indicates school districts will need to focus professional development on more in-depth instructional need, targeting a subset of teachers who need the most guidance.

Teachers reported that professional development focused heavily on using assessment data to inform instruction, but that’s not the area in which teachers want additional support. Teachers who address ELA/literacy standards in their instruction need help with:

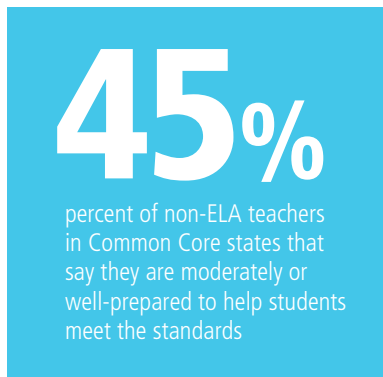
- Differentiating instruction for students at different skill levels, for students with disabilities, and for English-language learners; and

- Teaching students on writing about complex topics and using arguments to support claims in their analyses.

Who needs the extra support? More elementary school teachers than high school teachers expressed a desire for professional development on writing and general strategies for meeting the ELA/literacy standards. The study also found that teachers in schools with large populations of students who are eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch indicated a greater need for professional development in writing than those at schools serving fewer students in that population.

“The implication of a need for more in-depth (professional development) places demands on districts and support providers to go beyond daylong workshops and walkthroughs of key elements of the standards to more-intensive and more-collaborative professional development opportunities

that provide focused guidance on teachers’ instruction and use of specific curricula,” the report concludes. “Indeed, much research suggests that the most effective professional learning opportunities are moderately intense, ongoing, and curriculum specific.”



// Pamela R. Johnson: Getting to know students and their families gives educators insight in promoting student success.

- Highlight the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement.
- Share fun learning activities that involve a parent’s participation.
- Ensure that parents are aware of their child’s academic performance levels and what is needed to prevent summer slide.