

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN A TIME OF CORE STANDARDS

English Language Arts
Grades 6–8



Tonya Perry
with Rebecca Manery

NCTE

National Council of Teachers of English

Manuscript Editor: THERESA KAY

Staff Editor: BONNY GRAHAM

Interior Design: JENNY JENSEN GREENLEAF

Cover Design: PAT MAYER

Cover Background: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/ARTIOM MUHACIOV

NCTE Stock Number: 49423

©2011 by the National Council of Teachers of English.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission from the copyright holder. Printed in the United States of America.

It is the policy of NCTE in its journals and other publications to provide a forum for the open discussion of ideas concerning the content and the teaching of English and the language arts. Publicity accorded to any particular point of view does not imply endorsement by the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, or the membership at large, except in announcements of policy, where such endorsement is clearly specified.

Every effort has been made to provide current URLs and email addresses, but because of the rapidly changing nature of the Web, some sites and addresses may no longer be accessible.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Perry, Tonya.

Supporting students in a time of core standards : English language arts, grades 6–8 /

Tonya Perry with Rebecca Manery.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-8141-4942-3 ((pbk))

1. Language arts (Middle school)--Standards--United States. 2. Language arts (Middle school)--Curricula--United States. 3. Education--Standards--United States. 4. Effective teaching--United States. I. Manery, Rebecca. II. Title

LB1631.P42 2011

428.0071'2--dc23

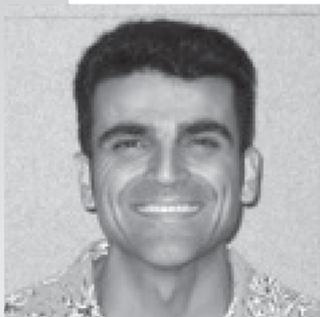
2011035735

Contents

SECTION I	OBSERVING THE CCSS	1
CHAPTER 1	Demystifying the Common Core State Standards.....	5
SECTION II	CONTEXTUALIZING	19
CHAPTER 2	Inquiry and Independence in the English Language Arts Classroom.....	21
CHAPTER 3	Thinking Deeply about Text.....	39
CHAPTER 4	Reading/Writing Workshop.....	54
SECTION III	BUILDING	67
CHAPTER 5	Individual Considerations: Keeping Students at the Center.....	71
CHAPTER 6	Working Collaboratively to Enact the CCSS.....	84
CHAPTER 7	Becoming a Teacher Advocate.....	91
APPENDIX A	Resources.....	95
APPENDIX B	NCTE Principles	99
AUTHOR	116
CONTRIBUTING AUTHOR	117

Reading/Writing Workshop

Workshop is a term that has taken on many different meanings, and it is enacted in a variety of ways by individual teachers. As the two vignettes below demonstrate, even when teachers are using the same text in a workshop context, their classes can look very different. This is a good thing. The flexibility of reading/writing workshop means that teachers can adapt it to the specific context in which they work, addressing individual student needs as well as school and district requirements. At the same time, central features of workshop make it an excellent way to address the CCSS. The integration of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language can be accomplished effectively in reading/writing workshop. This is also an approach that encourages active and independent learning as well as transfer of learning—all attributes that the CCSS emphasize for students.



Meet Rick Joseph, Covington School

Covington School, where Rick Joseph teaches, is located in an affluent suburb of Detroit where the per capita income is one of the highest in the nation. This is reflected in the student population, where less than 5 percent is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Covington serves 648 students in grades 3–8, with twenty-seven youngsters in each class. Students are 88 percent Euro-American, 6 percent African American, 5 percent Asian, and 1 percent Latino or other. Many parents are actively involved in the school, providing material resources via PTA funding and human resources of time and talent. Teachers can request budgets for special projects from the PTA, and it is common for parents to visit class to share ideas and activities from their professions. In addition to traditional teaching materials, the school provides a technology-rich environment so that Rick can integrate the digital world into his classroom. Both computer labs and laptop carts are available to students.

The school also supports professional development with weekly team planning time and monthly half-day team planning time focused on technology integration. Parent involvement in students' education is high, so one of the challenges of teaching in a school like Covington, Rick explains, is educating parents so that they understand what he is trying to accomplish in his classes.

Rick is in his sixteenth year of teaching and his seventh year at Covington. He taught for nine years in Chicago in three different schools, all serving a majority of Latino students. Fluent in Spanish, Rick became a teacher because he wanted to address the achievement gap between European American and Latino students, and he chose to work in urban schools where the need was greatest. From early in his career, collaborating with other teachers has been important to Rick. He learns from sharing ideas with colleagues, exploring together the challenges and questions that arise in classrooms. Working toward certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) pushed him to examine his teaching practices closely, and at the same time it provided him opportunities to learn from colleagues. Likewise, being on a design team for the National Teachers' Academy, serving as a mentor teacher at the Chicago Academy, and participating in the Academy for Urban School Leadership have all contributed to Rick's growth as a teacher. In each of these contexts he has enhanced his own teaching practice by working with colleagues.

Since moving to Michigan, Rick has been active with the National Writing Project and with the Network of Michigan Educators. Both of these experiences have deepened Rick's thinking about the most effective ways to develop students' abilities as readers and writers. "I can't imagine being a teacher without having opportunities to work with colleagues," he claims. He comes to his 5/6 multi-age classroom, where he teaches both English and social studies, energized and ready to provide rich learning experiences for his students. These learning experiences extend outside the classroom, as Rick teaches an after-school class in video production.

In every teaching context Rick's goals are the same: to help all his students become lifelong readers and writers, to read actively and compose creatively by choice, to use their skills to help others in real and meaningful ways, and to make significant academic growth from wherever they are to wherever they can possibly go.

Workshop with New Media: Rick's Classroom

"Welcome to Reader's Workshop" is on the screen when students walk into Rick's sixth-grade classroom on a sunny November day. Students sit in teams at tables, and their pictures are on the wall surrounded by character traits with which they have identified. On the "We Are Geniuses!" bulletin board students have put their names under the type of intelligence they prefer, reflecting their understanding of multiple intelligences. A Battle of the Books bulletin board lists students' reading

progress. Students have brought in pictures, mainly of parents, for the “Who Are Your Mentors?” bulletin board.

As soon as students are settled, Rick puts the lyrics to “Sweet Home Alabama” on the screen, asking if they recognize it. They identify it as a popular Kid Rock song, and Rick explains that it originated with a band called Lynyrd Skynyrd. Then he points to the lyrics about returning to Alabama “to see my kin,” and he notes that the Watsons, of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*, are going to Alabama to visit family. Then he asks the team captains to distribute books and thinkmarks to their teams.

“What is dialogue?” Rick asks. He demonstrates a dialogue with a student and identifies the prefix *di-* as meaning two. Then he asks, “How do you know when dialogue is good?” One student says that good dialogue has to include questions. When some students disagree, Rick asks two volunteers to try to have a conversation without questions and then asks them how it felt. Rick types and projects their responses on the screen for the class to consider.

Rick reads aloud a section of dialogue from page 35 of *The Watsons*, using character voices, and then asks students to discuss in pairs whether this is good dialogue. Students talk for about two minutes while Rick walks around listening in, then he reports some of what he has heard about the nature of good dialogue. He mentions terms such as *realistic*, *appropriate word choice*, and *fast paced* and asks students if they had similar thoughts. They indicate by raising their hands that they did.

Next Rick projects Independent Reading Instructions:

1. Read from wherever you left off.
2. Focus on author Christopher Paul Curtis’s use of dialogue.
3. As you find good use of dialogue, note the page number and explain why on your thinkmark.
4. Try for at least two examples of dialogue in your reading today.
5. We will stop at 10:45.

As students read and record examples of good dialogue on their thinkmarks, Rick conferences individually with four to five students, asking them questions about the text (“Who do you like better: Kenny or Byron?”) and asking them to read a portion of the text aloud to promote support for their preferences. This strategy also gives him a way to monitor students’ reading abilities. Rick makes notes about their reading on a grid chart on his laptop.

Rick tilts a rainstick to end independent reading. Then he shows a model wiki response to this journal assignment, explaining that students



Common Core State Standards

Rick integrates language instruction with reading instruction, meeting multiple standards and incorporating different types of literacy knowledge into a single lesson plan.



Connections

Formative assessment happens all the time in the classroom as teachers formally and informally conduct “checks” to see what students understand and have learned. Rick conducts formative evaluation of individual students, recording their progress in reading. For more information about formative assessments, see Section I.

will be making wiki entries, too. He demonstrates that a successful entry will cite the page number, describe what is happening in the book, give “my ideas,” and tell how the dialogue is effective. He goes on to explain that dialogue on a wiki and face-to-face dialogue follow similar rules.

Students then turn to face one another and discuss the good dialogue they found. Rick asks one pair to share with the class what they discussed, after he and a student volunteer have modeled how to cite page numbers and read with their partner from the book. When students read passages that aren’t dialogue, Rick shows students how quotation marks and other punctuation can help them identify dialogue. Team captains collect the books, and Rick plays a few seconds of “Sweet Home Alabama” as students leave.



Common Core State Standards

In this discussion about dialogue, Rick draws his students’ attention to different types of texts and text structures. This instruction will help students when they confront texts with different conventions, which is required by the CCSS and common in today’s English classrooms.

Growing in Professional Learning Communities: Rick’s Journey

Rick has been using a workshop approach to teaching for a number of years, but he didn’t use it in his first years of teaching. It was something he grew into as he became more experienced. After he had completed his MA and was regularly getting good evaluations for his classroom work, it would have been easy for him to coast, but, as he puts it, “I wanted to improve and become an even better teacher.” Preparing for NBPTS certification gave him an opportunity to meet with a group of colleagues who analyzed their own teaching as well as the work done by their students. He explains, “I needed a supportive community and positive peer pressure. Left to my own devices, I fall into a rut and don’t necessarily teach as effectively as I can when I know I will be sharing my practice.”

Because of Rick’s interest in motivating reluctant readers and writers, the workshop approach was especially attractive to him. He recognized that features of workshop such as peer interactions, opportunities for monitoring the learning of individual students, and sustained reading and writing would help him engage students who were not inherently drawn to literacy. Rick saw the value in using a workshop approach in his classes, but it was the sharing with colleagues that led him to implement it. Getting together regularly with other teachers to share ideas about instruction and student learning—a practice he continues into the present—helped him and still helps him take up the challenge of transforming his teaching practices. Whether the NBPTS cohort, the Academy for Urban School Leadership, or the Network of Michigan Educators in which he currently participates, professional learning communities have always been an important part of Rick’s teaching. Covington’s allocation of weekly and monthly team planning time gives Rick another professional learning community in which he



Connections

For more information on implementing a workshop approach in your classroom, consult the resources in Appendix A at the end of this volume.

can continue to grow as an educator and to share practice with other professionals in the building.

A workshop approach requires detailed knowledge about each student, and Rick starts the school year with three surveys—about reading, writing, and general interests—to get acquainted with his students, both personally and academically. Because he teaches in a multi-age setting, he has many of the same students for two years and gets to know them well. He also learns a lot from conversations with parents who, as he puts it, “have so much more longitudinal knowledge of their child’s academic and social/emotional history.”

Formative assessment is central to Rick’s teaching. He regularly gathers information about students’ responses to and comprehension of the literature they read and the quality of what they write. Asking individual students a few questions about their reading or having them read passages aloud, as he did in the vignette included here, gives him a clear indication about their comprehension of the text and this, in turn, enables him to modify his teaching to help them learn. Rather than waiting for a test at the end of the unit, Rick is able to assess student learning on a regular basis, and the notes he keeps on each student help him chart progress.

When Rick looks at the CCSS he sees connections with many of his own goals. In harmony with the CCSS Anchor Standards for reading, he wants his students to read closely and cite evidence from the text, discern central ideas, analyze the development of ideas, interpret the language of texts, analyze textual structures, assess point of view, evaluate content in diverse media, evaluate arguments, analyze thematic similarities, and read independently and proficiently. He also knows that students need to be engaged and motivated to accomplish these things, and he works hard to connect

with their interests—such as the song in the vignette—and to affirm them as learners—as the bulletin boards in his room show—so that they will become lively participants in their own learning.

The CCSS Anchor Standard that emphasizes using technology to produce and publish writing as well as interact and collaborate with others fits well with Rick’s—and his school’s—emphasis on technology integration. In keeping with this and with NCTE’s definition of 21st century literacies, Rick wants his students to learn to work collaboratively, share information for a variety of purposes, analyze multiple streams of information, create and evaluate multimedia texts, and attend to the ethical responsibilities of digital environments. To this end he regularly integrates technology into his teaching, exposing students to a variety of texts, as was evident in the vignette. He also requires his students to produce new media texts, as his wiki assignment demonstrates.

Rick’s journey has taken him to a variety of schools, and it has led him to work with many different kinds of students, but the desire to improve



**Common
Core State
Standards**

Rick examined the CCSS for standards that speak to similar goals as those he already held for his students. Try reading the CCSS with an eye toward where your goals and the goals of the standards are particularly “in harmony” with one another. Use these places to reflect on ways you can integrate the standards into your existing curriculum, and consider how and where to adjust your curriculum. For more ideas about curriculum planning, see Section III.

his practice has been constant in all of these settings and with all of his students. Collaboration with colleagues, both in his own school and from other schools, plays a key role in Rick’s ongoing development as a teacher.

Meet Sarah Rennick, Reuther Middle School

Sarah Rennick has been teaching for eleven years, but like all teachers who develop their practice year after year, she regularly takes up new approaches. During the past two years, she has begun using a workshop approach, and, as she puts it, her goal is “to get better at implementing it.” Sarah’s turn to the workshop approach was part of a school- and districtwide transformation that is part of the School Improvement Plan. Reuther Middle School, where Sarah teaches, is one of four middle schools in a suburban district that has a good record of student achievement. Overall, more than 80 percent of students in the district typically demonstrate proficiency on state-mandated tests.



This district has invested significant resources in the professional development of its teachers. Each grade level in each school has teacher leaders who meet regularly with one another to develop curriculum materials. Teachers receive release time to visit the classrooms of peers who are modeling specific teaching approaches. And a number of teachers have received support to participate in summer workshops to develop new teaching strategies. Three years ago, the school district developed a Teaching Checklist that includes both teaching strategies and specific content. For example, sixth-grade ELA teachers in the district are expected to help students learn about concepts such as point of view, summary, protagonist/antagonist, and metaphor. Teaching strategies for such concepts include brainstorming, using websites, writing riddles, and creating comic strips.

As a teacher leader, Sarah has been regularly involved in working with her colleagues to decide on the best strategies for fostering student learning. Reading/writing workshop was slated for adoption at the middle level after it had been successfully implemented in the district’s elementary schools. After first beginning to implement workshop last year, Sarah decided that it would be easier to move into the process more slowly. Accordingly, she and her teaching partner have divided reading



Collaboration

Sarah and her colleagues collaborate by sharing teaching responsibilities within a single grade level and co-planning workshop activities. For other ideas about ways in which you might collaborate with your colleagues, see Section III.

and writing workshops, with Sarah doing reading workshop one semester and writing the other. Working as a team, each of them sees all 120 sixth graders every other week. This way she is able to focus on one dimension at a time rather than plunging into the whole thing at once. Reading workshop requires students to read fifteen books (books with at least 150 pages) each year, 450 pages the first quarter, and 600 pages per quarter after that.

Text to Text, Text to World: Sarah’s Classroom

Colorful kites hang from the ceiling in Sarah’s bright and cheerful classroom. Images of popular book covers are posted on the wall under a sign that says “Have You Read This?” and students sit in three rows of paired desks. A SMART Board, TV, teacher computer, and three student computers comprise the technological resources. When

students come into the room, they turn in their reading logs, pick up their worksheets, and collect their journals and reading books. They three-hole punch their worksheets to put into their binders and then turn to the class’s main text, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, which Sarah surrounds with other texts. For example, she shares material about the Civil Rights Movement; a 1963 article about the church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama; and an article about the recent death (in prison) of one of the convicted bombers. She incorporates texts like these because she wants her students to be able to connect their reading with the larger world. Sarah passes out new reading logs and reminds students that they need to include a one-sentence summary for each of their twenty-minute readings—a total of 220 minutes by November 23. The guidelines are clear, but students need to take responsibility for accomplishing the specified amount of reading.



Common Core State Standards

The CCSS call for students to be proficient readers of both informational and fictional texts; novels with historical references like those in *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* can be paired with nonfiction texts to both increase students’ background knowledge and engage them with different types of texts on similar topics.

Sarah begins by showing a PowerPoint presentation on character types, encouraging her students to distinguish between protagonists and antagonists. She gives a definition of each and then asks students to talk with one another about which character in *The Watsons* fits these definitions. Then she does the same thing with round, flat, static, and dynamic characters. When students have difficulty deciding, Sarah offers more information. For example, when they wonder if Joey is a round character, she explains that they should be able to name five characteristics of a round character. Her goal is to give students language that they can use in discussing the book, language that can be transferred to other discussions and other English classes.

Sarah then reads aloud a portion of Chapter 9 from *The Watsons* where Kenny and his father have a heart-to-heart conversation about why Byron, Kenny’s older brother, is going to spend some time with his grandmother in Alabama instead of remaining with the rest of the family in Michigan. She asks students to turn and talk

with a peer about a time when they participated in a conversation where parents treated them as if they were adults. Students talk animatedly with one another, and Sarah moves around the room, listening to them. This conversation gives students an opportunity to think more deeply about the text and at the same time to make connections between it and their own experiences.

After this discussion, Sarah asks students to write in their journals in response to these questions: Who is the protagonist/antagonist in your independent reading? Why? In explaining the journal writing assignment, Sarah reminds students of the PowerPoint presentation she used at the beginning of class. By asking students to use terms she just introduced, Sarah creates a connection between in-class reading and the reading students are doing independently. In addition, this assignment helps students learn to transfer learning from one context to another.

Sarah asks students to follow the model of the “whopper paragraph,” one that includes a topic sentence, three supporting details, and a concluding sentence, and she models one of these paragraphs about a Harry Potter book. She also posts guidelines for whopper paragraphs on the SMART Board. Students write in their journals until the class is nearly over. There is just enough time for them to turn in their reading books and journals before it is time to move on to the next class.

Transformational Learning: Sarah’s Journey

Sarah was inspired to train as an elementary school teacher, but her first job was as a middle school science teacher, and she has chosen to remain at the middle school level ever since. “When I first began teaching English language arts, my curriculum was centered around a textbook,” Sarah begins. “Over time, I began to focus on learning goals for my students instead of just moving through the textbook.” Then she goes on to explain that as the standards movement evolved, so did the focus of her teaching. She has moved increasingly toward an emphasis on grade-level expectations that are derived from standards. “My team plans instruction around standards so we can incorporate novels and reading/writing workshop and still know we are hitting all the standards. We’ve been planning this way for three years; we’re not having any difficulty transitioning to the CCSS,” she explains.

The support of colleagues and administrators is important to Sarah’s professional growth. She is enthusiastic about the workshop approach because “You’re with the students, not sitting behind your desk,” but she also recognizes that implementing it effectively takes time and effort. “Following a textbook from chapter to chapter was easier,” she says, “but



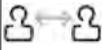
Honoring Diversity

Giving students chances to engage in conversations about the texts they read enables them to connect their experiences to the experiences of characters in the novel; guiding these conversation opportunities can help students focus their ideas while also giving them a chance to voice their individual opinions.



Connections

The temptation to follow “canned curricula” or textbook schedules can be a tempting one in the age of standardization; however, Sarah learned that with the help of her colleagues, she could create a curriculum that more closely met the needs of her students. For more ideas about planning a curriculum that meets the needs of your students, see the resources in Section III.



Integrated Teaching and Learning

Reflection is an important part of teacher development; keeping a journal and reflecting regularly on the process of integrating the standards can help teachers “formatively assess” themselves and their teaching practices. For questions to guide teacher reflection, see Section III.

I don’t think my students learned as much.” The transition to a workshop approach has been challenging, but she has learned a lot from the colleague with whom she alternates reading and writing workshops: “I had to have the support to really understand,” she says. Her colleague, who also has an elementary school background, regularly invites other teachers to visit classes where she does writing workshop, and Sarah finds these opportunities for observation helpful. In addition, there is a workshop consultant who is available to teachers, and Sarah has learned a lot from her. “I dug my heels in at first,” she says, “but these days I’m keeping a journal. It isn’t easy. Now I know how my students feel.”

The principal of Sarah’s school offers support for teacher learning. “There is professional development at every staff meeting,” Sarah explains. The principal also meets regularly with teacher leaders and department chairs to discuss curriculum and other issues surrounding student learning. “I personally feel included,” Sarah claims. She is also confident that the transition to the CCSS will be easy because she and her colleagues are so accustomed to addressing state standards in their teaching. And she knows she can count on the support of a principal who sees a direct connection between the professional development of teachers and student achievement. She understands her principal’s claim: “Professional development is not informational; it is transformational.”

Charting the Practices

The vignettes in this chapter illustrate how reading and writing workshops allow teachers the flexibility to adapt their instruction to their specific contexts and the needs of their students. Workshops also enable teachers to integrate multiple literacy activities—speaking, listening, writing, and reading. The following charts show how these teachers address specific standards in the CCSS in concert with NCTE principles to shape their teaching practices. The charts also include the learning practices students are expected to exhibit in response to the teaching practices.

Common Core Standards That Intersect with These Practices

Reading Standards for Literature, Grades 6–8

5. Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

↓ How Rick enacts the practice	← Teaching Practice →	How Sarah enacts the practice ↓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Facilitates whole-class discussion about dialogue and models a text-based conversation. → Demonstrates how to create a wiki post and models how to write a response. → Uses formative assessment to check students' comprehension and fluency. 	<p>Teacher provides students with a variety of ways to engage with text through reading, writing, discussing, and use of technology.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Teaches students terms and definitions for discussing characterization. → Directs students to find examples of different types of characters from class book. → Encourages students to question definitions to refine their understanding of character types.
↓ How Rick's students enact the practice	← Learning Practice →	How Sarah's students enact the practice ↓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Record examples of good dialogue on thinkmarks as they read. → Share their examples and explain their reasons to a partner; listen and respond to their partner's ideas. → Record their responses to text as wiki posts and respond thoughtfully to one another's posts. 	<p>Students interact with text in increasingly complex ways by reading, listening, speaking, writing, and using technology in whole-group and small-group settings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Discuss ideas and responses to text with classmates in a whole-class setting. → Listen and respond to classmates' ideas in pairs. → Apply their understanding of characterization to their independent reading. → Record examples and explanations in reading journals.

NCTE Principles

In reading instruction, emphasis should be placed on making meaning with text, including analysis of how text structures and features contribute to meaning.

See pages 102–103 for more on NCTE principles regarding reading instruction.

Common Core Standards That Intersect with These Practices

Speaking and Listening, Grades 6–8

1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

↓ How Rick enacts the practice	← Teaching Practice →	How Sarah enacts the practice ↓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Organizes students into teams and pairs to discuss the day's class topic. → Conferences individually with students, asking them questions about the text. → Uses student volunteers to demonstrate examples to the class. 	<p>Teachers facilitate student learning through collaborative discussions, including pairs, teams, and teacher-led group exercises.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Instructs the class as a whole and then asks students to talk with one another about the topic. → When students have difficulty in discussions, the teacher offers more information to help facilitate the discussion.
↓ How Rick's students enact the practice	← Learning Practice →	How Sarah's students enact the practice ↓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Students discuss in pairs the topic of good dialogue. → Student pairs are willing to share their findings with the entire class. → Students volunteer to help the teacher make demonstrations to the class. 	<p>Students participate in collaborative discussions (pairs, teams, one-on-one) about the text, building on one another's knowledge and experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Students talk with one another, sometimes in pairs, about class topics and relevant real-life experiences that can be applied to class.

NCTE Principles

To ensure that all students have an opportunity to develop skills of informal speech, teachers should not depend exclusively on volunteers in class discussion. Strategies for broadening participation include having all students respond in writing and then asking each student to respond aloud, asking students to discuss in pairs and report to the class, or distributing "talk tokens" that students can turn in after a contribution to a class discussion.

See pages 106–107 for more on NCTE principles regarding speaking and listening.

Frames That Build: Exercises to Interpret the CCSS

The following are a few exercises for individuals or teams of teachers to use to work more with the standards and see how these vignettes may provide a lens through which to view your own interpretation and individualized implementation of the standards.

- *Reading the standards.* Read the writing standards for your grade level and look for any language about the use of technology in student writing. Consider how you already use writing technologies—from the pencil to online writing spaces—in your teaching. What new technologies could you include to help twenty-first-century learners in your classroom meet the demands of the CCSS?
- *Working across genres.* Students today need to be able to navigate multiple types of text, all of which have different demands on both their composers and their readers. Rick draws students' attention to specific language and punctuation features to help them understand dialogue, and he helps them understand the genre of the wiki by comparing it to conversation. Write down all of the genres with which you engage your students and consider your approach to those genres. How can you raise students' textual awareness as both readers and writers as you move across genres and engage students with many types of text?

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN A TIME OF CORE STANDARDS: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, GRADES 6–8

This book takes you into the classrooms of middle school and junior high teachers who are meeting the demands of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) while staying true to their students and to their own knowledge of what constitutes effective, student-centered teaching. Beginning with an overview of the CCSS, the first section of the book addresses some common questions and concerns about the new standards. Perry then spotlights individual grade 6–8 classrooms, showing the real learning and achievement that occur when teachers focus on students' needs and interests rather than on trying simply to "cover" a list of standards.

The teaching vignettes in Section II honor a variety of school contexts, cultures, and teaching environments, from struggling areas coping with the effects of diminished resources to more affluent districts that can offer students the latest in high-tech learning materials. In all cases, though, you see individual teachers' innovative approaches, based on their experiences of what does—and doesn't—work, as well as on NCTE principles of good teaching. These rich vignettes, focusing on oft-taught books such as *The Outsiders* and *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*, feature student collaboration, writing for authentic audiences, and the incorporation of visual literacies through the use of photos and YouTube clips.

The final section shows how to build instruction *from* and *with* the CCSS, offering ideas for teachers as individuals, as collaborators with colleagues, and as advocates for professional support. Throughout, the teachers affirm the importance of professional development, by belonging to organizations like NCTE and the National Writing Project, by attending local and national conferences, and by participating in local communities of practice.



Tonya Perry is an assistant professor of English education in the School of Education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where she works primarily in literacy practices for diverse middle school students and urban education. As a director and principal investigator for the National Writing Project's UAB Red Mountain Writing Project site, Perry works with teachers across multiple school districts to impact literacy skills.

NCTE National Council of
Teachers of English

1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801-1096

800-369-6283 or 217-328-3870

www.ncte.org

ISBN 978-0-8141-4942-3



9 780814 149423