

Criteria for Curriculum Materials

Common Core State Standards in ELA & Literacy, Grades 4-12

Introduction

The following statements were developed by the authors of the Common Core State Standards. These criteria are designed to guide publishers as well as curriculum developers as they work to ensure alignment with the Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy for History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects. The criteria articulated below concentrate on the most significant elements of the Common Core Standards and lay out their implications for aligning materials with the Standards. They are intended to direct curriculum developers and publishers to be purposeful and strategic both in what to include and what to exclude. By underscoring what matters most in the Standards, the criteria illustrate what shifts must take place in the next generation of curricula, including paring away elements that distract or are at odds with the Common Core Standards.

Many of the statements below echo what the New Hampshire Curriculum Frameworks documents have always stated and emphasized, but go into much more detail. Accordingly, this document should be very helpful to NH educators.

At the heart of these criteria are instructions for shifting the focus of literacy instruction to careful examination of the text itself. In aligned materials, work in reading and writing (as well as speaking and listening) must center on the text. The Common Core Standards are emphatic about students reading text of an adequate range and complexity. Just as important, the Standards focus intently on students reading closely to draw evidence from the text itself. The criteria outlined below therefore revolve around the texts that students read and the kinds of questions students should address as they write and speak about them.

The Standards and these criteria bring a sharpened focus to close connection between comprehension of text and acquisition of knowledge. It is easy to see how comprehension links to knowledge in reading science and history, but the same deeper principles apply to all reading. The criteria make plain that developing students' prowess at drawing knowledge from the text itself is the point of teaching; teaching is not a substitute for the text. Student knowledge drawn from the text shows up, for example, when the student uses evidence from the text to support a claim about the text. Hence evidence and knowledge link directly to the text.

Obviously, the student's own prior knowledge of the subject must be coordinated with new knowledge from the text by, **not for**, the student. Students need to develop their own expertise. In reading primary sources, students must learn that it is important to set aside their own prior knowledge to focus on the text itself. Turning away from the text to discussions stimulated by information outside the text should come late, after the text itself is understood. Thinking about context is an expertise students develop by reading each text carefully, through a progression of increasingly complex texts and working with knowledge from the text in their own oral and written explanations and arguments.

Document Organization

This document has two parts: the first articulates criteria for ELA materials in Grades 4-12 and the second for History/Social Studies and Science/Technical materials in Grades 6-12. Each part contains sections discussing the following key topics:

1. Text Complexity
2. Range and Quality of Texts
3. High Quality, Text-Dependent Questions and Tasks
4. Writing and Research that Analyzes Sources and Deploys Evidence

The Criteria for ELA materials in Grades 4-12 has one additional section:

5. Additional Key Criteria for Student Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking

Each section will eventually have an appendix of examples of curricular materials that reflect adherence to these criteria (the appendices are currently in development).

Efficacy of Aligned Materials

It can be surprising which questions, tasks, and instructions provoke the most productive engagement with text and accelerate student growth as well as deepen instructor facility with the materials. The most important evidence is that the curriculum accelerates student performance towards career and college readiness. Hence, curriculum offered as an excellent match for the criteria outlined below should be field-tested and evidence provided of its usability and efficacy with a full range of students, including ELL students.

ELA Curricula Grades 4-12

1. **Text Complexity:** The Common Core Standards require students to read increasingly complex texts with increasing independence as they progress towards career and college readiness.

A. *Texts for each grade align with the complexity requirements outlined in the Standards.*

Reading Standard 10 outlines the level of text complexity at which students need to demonstrate comprehension in each grade. Research makes clear that the complexity levels of the texts students are presently required to read are significantly below what is required to achieve college and career readiness. Far too often students who have fallen behind are given less complex texts rather than the support they need to read texts at the appropriate level of complexity. The Common Core Standards hinge on students encountering appropriately complex texts at each grade level in order to develop the mature language skills and the conceptual knowledge they need for success in school and life. (Appendix A in the Common Core Standards gives further information on how text complexity can be measured.)¹

- B. *Shorter, challenging texts that elicit close reading and re-reading are provided at each grade.*** The Common Core Standards place a high priority on the close, sustained reading of complex text, beginning with Reading Standard 1. Such reading emphasizes the particular over the general and strives to focus first on what lies within the four corners of the text. Such close reading often requires compact, short, self-contained texts that students can read and re-read deliberately and slowly to probe and ponder the meanings of individual words, the order in which sentences unfold, and the development of ideas over the course of the text. Materials should also design opportunities for close reading of selected passages from extended or longer texts and create a series of questions that demonstrate how close attention to those passages allows students to gather evidence and knowledge from the text.

- C. *Scaffolds enable all students to access complex text directly, rather than reducing the complexity of the text.*** Many students will need careful instruction—including effective scaffolding—to enable them to read at the appropriate level of text complexity required by the Common Core Standards. However, the scaffolding should not preempt or replace the text by translating its contents for students or telling students what they are going to learn in advance of reading the text; that is, the scaffolding should not itself become an alternate, simpler source of information that diminishes the need for students to read the text itself *carefully*. Effective scaffolding aligned with the Standards should allow the reader first to encounter the text for herself with minimal clarifications. Follow-up support should guide the reader when encountering places in the text where they might struggle. Aligned

¹ A working group is developing clear common standards for measuring text complexity that can be consistent across different curricula and publishers. These criteria, due out in June 2011, will blend quantitative and qualitative factors and will be widely shared and made available to publishers and curriculum developers. It is likely that the measurement of some narrative fiction as well as poetry and drama for the time being will have to depend largely on qualitative judgments that are based on the principles laid out in Appendix A and are being further developed and refined.

curriculum materials therefore should explicitly direct students to re-read challenging portions of the text. When productive struggle with the text is exhausted, questions rather than explanations can help focus the student's attention to key phrases and statements in the text, or the organization of ideas in the paragraph. In responding to the needs of students who are farthest behind, materials should reduce the complexity of the text as a last resort. Materials for students' independent reading (without scaffolding) will need to include texts at students' own reading level, but as part of independent reading, students should also be challenged to read texts with complexity levels that will stretch them.

D. *Materials ensure students are reading complex text with fluency as well as*

comprehension. Fluency describes the pace and accuracy with which students read—the extent to which students adjust the pace, stress, and tone of their reading to respond to the words in the text. Often students who are behind face fluency challenges and need more practice reading sufficiently complex text with fluency. Materials aligned with the Common Core Standards should draw on the connections between the Speaking and Listening Standards and the Reading Standards on fluency to provide opportunities for students to develop this important skill (for example, rehearsing an oral performance of a written piece has the built in benefit of promoting reading fluency).

E. *Materials focus on academic vocabulary prevalent in complex texts throughout reading, writing, listening and speaking instruction.*

Academic vocabulary (described in more detail as Tier 2 words in Appendix A of the Common Core Standards) includes those words that are replete in all types of complex texts from different disciplines. Often curricula ignore these words and instead pay attention to the technical words that are unique to a discipline. Materials aligned with the Common Core Standards should help students acquire knowledge of general academic vocabulary because these are the words that will help them access a wide range of complex texts. For example, consider a word such as *appear* and the various ways it could be used:

- John *appeared* in the room.
- My parents made an *appearance*.
- In an interview your *appearance* is key.
- You *appear* to be annoyed with me .
- By all *appearances* the team had given up.

Aligned materials should guide students to gather as much as they can about the meaning of these words from how they are being used in the text, while offering support for vocabulary when students are not likely able to figure out their meanings from the text alone. In alignment with the Standards, materials should also require students to explain the impact of specific word choices on the text.

2. **Range and Quality of Texts:** The Common Core Standards require a greater focus on informational text in elementary school and literary non-fiction in ELA classes in Grades 6-12.

- A. *Grades 4-5: Literacy programs include texts that are 50% literature and 50% informational.*** Achieving the appropriate balance between literary and informational text in the next generation of materials requires a significant shift in early literacy materials and instructional time so that equal time and weight is given to scientific and historical text as is given to literary text (see p. 31 of the Standards for details on how these two different types of texts are defined). In addition, in order to develop reading comprehension for *all* readers, as well as build vocabulary, the selected informational texts should build a coherent body of knowledge both within and across grades.² The example of the Human Body (p. 35 in the Common Core Standards) offers an example of a coherent approach to building knowledge in a domain both within and across grades.
- B. *Grades 6-12: ELA programs include substantially more literary non-fiction.*** The Common Core Standards require aligned ELA curriculum materials in Grades 6-12 to include a blend of literature (fiction, poetry, and drama) and a substantial sampling of literary non-fiction, including essays, speeches, opinion pieces, biographies, journalism, and historical, scientific or other documents written for a broad audience (see p. 57 of the Standards for more details). Most ELA programs and materials designed for them will need to increase substantially the amount of literary non-fiction they include. The Standards emphasize arguments (such as the Founding Documents) and other literary nonfiction that contain informational text structures rather than narrative literary non-fiction that tells a story, such as memoirs or biographies. (Appendix B of the Common Core Standards provides several examples of high quality literary non-fiction.)
- C. *Teachers and students are guided to analyze dense arguments and information at the heart of complex literary non-fiction.*** As previously stated, the Common Core Standards emphasize the reading of more literary non-fiction, particularly literary non-fiction that makes an extended argument or provides dense scientific, historical, or technical information. This emphasis mirrors the Writing Standards that focus on students' abilities to marshal an argument and write to inform or explain. The shift in both reading and writing constitutes a significant change from the traditional focus in ELA classrooms on narrative text or the narrative aspects of literary nonfiction (the characters and the story) towards more in depth engagement with the informational and argumentative aspects of these texts. While the English teacher is not meant to be a content expert in an area covered by the text, materials should guide teachers and students to demonstrate careful understanding of the information developed in the text. For example, in a narrative with a great deal of science, teachers and students should be required to follow and comprehend the scientific information as presented by the text. Likewise, it is just as essential that teachers and students follow the details of an argument and reasoning in literary non-fiction as for them to attend to the style.

² The note on the range and content of student reading in K-5 states (p.10): "by reading texts in history/social studies, science, and other disciplines, students build a foundation of knowledge in these fields that will also give them background knowledge to be better readers in all content areas in later grades. Students can only gain this foundation when the curriculum is intentionally and coherently structured to develop rich content knowledge within and across grades."

D. *Quality of the suggested texts is high—they are worth reading closely and exhibit exceptional craft and thought or provide useful information.* Given the emphasis of the Common Core Standards on close reading, the texts selected should be worthy of close attention and careful re-reading. To become career and college ready, students must grapple with a range of works that span many genres, cultures, and eras and model the kinds of thinking and writing students should aspire to in their own work.³ (See Appendix B of the Standards for grade specific examples of texts.)

E. *Specific texts or text types named in the Standards are included.* At specific points, the Common Core Standards require certain texts or types of texts. In Grades 9-12, the Founding Documents, selections from American Literature and World Literature, a play by Shakespeare, and an American drama are all required. In early grades, students are required to study classic myths and stories, including works representing diverse cultures. Aligned materials for Grades 4-12 should set out a coherent selection and sequence of texts (of sufficient complexity and quality) to give students a well-developed sense of bodies of literature (like American Literature or classic myths and stories) as part of becoming college and career ready.

3. **High Quality Text Dependent Questions and Tasks:** Among the highest priorities of the Common Core Standards is that students can read closely and gain knowledge from texts.

A. *A significant percentage of questions/tasks are text dependent.* Aligned curriculum materials should include rigorous text dependent questions that can only be answered by careful scrutiny of the text and by drawing evidence from the reading to support the response. Text dependent questions do not require information or evidence from outside the text or texts; they establish what follows and what does not follow from the text itself. They are questions students can answer with only reference to the text. Between 80-90% of the Reading Standards in each grade require text dependent analysis. Therefore aligned curriculum materials must concentrate exclusively on text dependent questions and avoid those that rely on outside information to answer. This text dependent approach can and should be applied to building knowledge from multiple sources; it simply requires that each source be read and understood carefully before moving to additional sources.

B. *High quality sequences of text dependent questions elicit a sustained discussion of the specifics of the text and their impact.* The sequence of questions should cultivate student mastery of the details of the text as well as the significance of those particulars. Questions aligned with Common Core Standards should be focused on the unique qualities of the text and demand close attention to the text to answer fully. Such questions make students alert to the choices authors make and the impact of those choices on the meaning of the text. An effective set of questions might begin with relatively simple questions that encourage attention to the specific details and then move on to explore the impact of those details on the text as a whole.

³ From the note on the range and content of student reading of literary text in ELA in 6-12, p.35

- C. Questions and tasks require the use of textual evidence, including supporting logical inferences from the text.** The Common Core Standards require students to become more adept at drawing evidence from the text and explaining that evidence orally and in writing. Aligned curriculum materials therefore should include explicit models of high quality evidence-based answers to questions—samples of proficient student responses—about specific texts from each grade. Questions should require students to demonstrate that they follow the details of what is explicitly stated and also are able to make non-trivial inferences beyond what is explicitly stated in the text to what logically follows from the evidence in the text.
- D. Questions and tasks require careful comprehension of the text before asking for further critique, evaluation, or interpretation.** The Common Core Standards require that aligned curriculum materials call for students to demonstrate a careful understanding of what they read before engaging their opinions, appraisals, or interpretations. Aligned materials should require students to demonstrate that they have followed the details and logic of an author’s argument before they are asked to evaluate the thesis or compare the thesis to others. Additionally, when engaging in critique, materials should require students to return to the text to check the quality and accuracy of their evaluations and interpretations.
- E. Materials focus on text based activities rather than activities where text plays an ancillary role.** Materials aligned to the Common Core Standards should be designed so that the central focus of classroom time is spent on close reading, including writing from sources and conversations (speaking and listening) that center on the text. Rather than consigned to the margins when completing assignments, close and careful reading must be an absolutely essential and central part of classroom activities. Likewise, recommended reading strategies should grow out of close reading rather than being emphasized as a separate body of material. **Far too much of existing curriculum focuses on either de-contextualized strategies or pre-loading instructions for reading, drawing students away from reading closely when first encountering a text.** Such strategies should be driven by the text demands, and activated most frequently when wrestling with difficult portions of a text.
- 4. Writing and Research That Analyzes Sources and Deploys Evidence:** The Common Core Standards require students to show that they can analyze and synthesize sources and present careful analysis, well defended claims, and clear information.
- A. Writing to sources is a key task included throughout grade level materials.** Several of the Writing Standards, including most explicitly Standard 9, require students to draw evidence from a text or texts to support analysis, reflection or research. Materials aligned with the Common Core Standards should give students extensive opportunities to write in response to sources.

B. *Materials evidence an increasing focus on argument and informative writing as the grades progress.* While narrative writing is given prominence in early grades, as students progress through the grades the Common Core Standards increasingly ask students to write arguments or informational reports from sources. As a consequence, less classroom time should be spent on personal writing in response to de-contextualized prompts that ask students to detail personal experiences or opinions, especially in later grades. The Common Core Standards require that the balance of writing asked of students should be in accordance with the balance of student writing assessed on NAEP:

- In Elementary School, 30% of student writing should be to argue, 35% should be to explain/inform, and 35% should be narrative.
- In Middle School, 35% of student writing should be to write arguments, 35% should be to explain/inform, and 30% should be narrative.
- In High School, 40% of student writing should be to write arguments, 40% should be to explain/inform, and 20% should be narrative.

These forms of writing are not strictly independent; for example, arguments and explanations often include narrative elements. It is also worth noting that both informing and arguing rely on using information or evidence, and often require drawing this information or evidence from texts through reading.

C. *Extensive practice with short, focused research projects is evident.* Writing Standard 7 emphasizes that students should conduct several short research projects in addition to more sustained research efforts. Materials should require several of these short research projects— typically taking roughly a week and occurring at a minimum quarterly—to enable students to repeat the research process many times and develop the expertise needed to conduct research independently. A progression of shorter research projects also encourages students to develop expertise in one area by confronting different aspects of the same topic as well as more complex texts and source materials on that topic.

5. Additional Key Criteria for Student Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking:

A. *Materials require independent student work throughout the curriculum.* The Common Core Standards emphasize that college and career ready work must be independent. It is essential that curriculum provide opportunities within class and outside of class for independent work to cultivate that independence. Aligned materials therefore should guide teachers to provide scaffolding and support to students, but also to remove those supports by including tasks that require students to demonstrate their independent capacity to read and write.

B. *Materials skillfully use multimedia and technology to deepen encounters with texts and to provide opportunities for presenting and sharing information.* The Common Core Standards require that students can compare the knowledge they gain from reading texts to

knowledge gained from other multimedia sources, such as video. The Standards for Reading Literature specifically require students to observe different productions of the same play to assess how each production interprets evidence from the script. Similarly the Writing Standards require students to utilize electronic tools to publish and interact with their peers regarding writing, and the Speaking and Listening Standards require that students incorporate multimedia elements to convey information and ideas effectively. **Materials aligned with the Common Core Standards therefore use multimedia and technology in a way that engages students in absorbing or expressing details of the text rather than becoming a distraction or replacement for engaging with the text.**

- C. *Speaking and listening prompts and questions offer opportunities for students to share preparation, evidence, and research.*** In accordance with the Speaking and Listening Standards, materials aligned with the Common Core Standards show teachers how to plan engaging discussions around grade level topics and texts that students have studied and researched in advance. Materials should highlight strengthening students listening skills as well as their ability to respond to and to challenge their peers with relevant follow up questions and evidence.
- D. *Grammar and language conventions receive full and specific coverage.*** The Language Standards provide a focus for instruction each year to ensure that students gain adequate mastery of the essential “rules” of standard written and spoken English. They also push students to learn how to approach language as a matter of craft so they can communicate clearly and powerfully. In addition to meeting each year’s grade-specific Standards, students are expected to retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades. Thus aligned materials should demonstrate that they explicitly and effectively support student mastery of the full range of grammar and conventions as they are applied to increasingly sophisticated contexts. The materials should also indicate when students should adhere to formal conventions and when they are speaking and writing for a less formal purpose.
- E. *A significant number of the tasks and questions included in formative or interim assessments clearly align with the Standards and demand application to progressively more complex texts over time.*** Sample assessment tasks should point to the Common Core Standard(s) that inspired them and be written in such a way that it is possible to trace them back to those Standard(s). To ensure fidelity and alignment, as well as accustom teachers and students to the Standards, the vast majority of the questions and tasks on formative or interim assessments should align in this fashion.

History/Social Studies and Science/Technical Subjects Literacy Curricula, Grades 6-12

Introduction

This brief addendum to the publishing criteria for ELA 4-12 focuses on the portions of those criteria most relevant to materials in history/social studies and science/technical subjects. In the list that follows, we restate several of the key points from the ELA criteria as they relate to these content areas and add others that are particularly significant. As was the case with ELA, what follows is not an exhaustive list, but the most significant elements of the Common Core Standards to be mindful of in the revision and development of aligned materials.

Achieving the Literacy Standards requires substantially expanding the literacy requirements in history/social studies as well as in science and technical subjects. The adoption of the Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects therefore require several significant shifts in these curricula. Specifically, in alignment with NAEP, the Standards require that in Grades 6-12, student reading across the curriculum must include a balance of texts that is one-third literary, one-third history/social studies, and one-third science. Specific Standards (p. 60-66) define the actual literacy skills for which history/social science and science and technical teachers are responsible. (Appendix B of the Common Core Standards contains a selection of texts of appropriate quality and complexity for study in these disciplines.)

1. **Text Complexity:** The Common Core Standards require students to read increasingly complex texts with increasing independence as they progress towards career and college readiness.
 - A. ***Texts align with the complexity requirements outlined in the Standards.*** Reading Standard 10 specifies the level of text complexity at which students need to demonstrate comprehension in each grade. Research makes clear that the complexity levels of the texts students are presently required to read are significantly below what is required to achieve college and career readiness. Far too often students who have fallen behind are given less complex texts rather than the support they need to read texts at the appropriate level of complexity. The Common Core Standards hinge on students encountering appropriately complex texts at each grade level in order to develop the mature language skills and the conceptual knowledge students need for success in school and life. (Appendix A in the Common Core Standards gives further information on how text complexity can be measured.)⁴
 - B. ***Scaffolds enable all students to access complex text directly, rather than reducing the complexity of the text.*** Many students will need careful instruction—including effective scaffolding—to enable them to read at the levels of text complexity required by the

⁴ A working group is developing clear common standards for measuring text complexity that can be consistent across different curricula and publishers. These criteria, due out in June 2011, will blend quantitative and qualitative factors and will be widely shared and made available to publishers and curriculum developers. It is likely that the measurement of some narrative fiction as well as poetry and drama for the time being will have to depend largely on qualitative judgments that are based on the principles laid out in Appendix A and are being further developed and refined.

Common Core Standards. However, the scaffolding should not preempt or replace the text by translating its contents for students or telling students what they are going to learn in advance of reading the text; that is, the scaffolding should not itself become an alternate, simpler source of information that diminishes the need for students to read the text itself carefully. Effective scaffolding aligned with the Standards should allow the reader first to encounter the text for herself with minimal clarifications. Follow-up support should guide the reader when encountering places in the text where they might struggle. In responding to the needs of students who are farthest behind, aligned *materials should reduce the complexity of the text as a last resort.*

C. *Materials focus on academic vocabulary prevalent in more complex texts as well as domain specific words.* Academic vocabulary (described in more detail as Tier 2 words in Appendix A of the Common Core Standards) includes those words that readers will find in all types of complex texts from different disciplines. Often curricula ignore these words and instead pay attention to the technical words that are unique to a discipline. Materials aligned to the Common Core should help students acquire knowledge of general academic vocabulary in addition because these words will help students access a range of complex texts.

2. **Range and Quality of Texts:** The Common Core Standards require a keen focus on informational text.

A. *Curricula provide texts that are valuable sources of information.* Informational texts in science, history, and technical subjects may not often exhibit literary craft, but they should be worth reading in order to gain important knowledge; they should be valuable sources of information. What is essential is that the scientific and historical texts chosen for careful study are focused on such significant topics that they are worth the instructional time for students to examine them slowly and deliberately to develop a full understanding. In order to encourage close reading, several of these texts should be short enough to enable repeated examination; extended texts should include shorter selected passages for special focus.

B. *Curricula include opportunities to combine quantitative information derived from charts, graphs and other formats and media with information derived from text.* An important part of building knowledge in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects is integrating information drawn from different formats and media. For example, the Reading Standards require students to integrate the knowledge they gain from quantitative information with information they gain from words either within a single text or across several sources. Materials aligned with the Common Core Standards should require students to compare their own experimental results to results about which they have read and integrate information from video or other media with what they learn from text.

3. **High Quality, Text Dependent Questions and Tasks:** Among the highest priorities of the Common Core Standards is that students can read closely and gain knowledge from texts.

A. *Curricula provide opportunities for students to gain knowledge through careful reading of a specific text or texts.* As in the ELA Reading Standards, the large majority of the Literacy Standards for History/Social Studies and for Science and Technical Subjects require that aligned curricula include high-quality questions and tasks that are text dependent. Such questions should incite students to ‘read like a detective’ by prompting relevant and central inquiries into the meaning of the source material that can be answered first through close attention to the text. The Literacy Standards therefore require students to demonstrate their ability to follow the details of what is explicitly stated, make inferences that logically follow from what is stated, and draw knowledge from the text. Materials should design opportunities for close reading of selected passages from extended or longer texts and create a series of questions that demonstrate how close attention to those passages allow students to gather evidence and knowledge from the text. This text dependent approach can and should be applied to building knowledge from the comparison and synthesis of multiple sources. In science and history work with multiple sources is central. What is required is that each source be read and understood carefully before moving to additional sources. It bears noting that science includes many non-text sources such as experiments, observations, and discourse around these scientific activities. These sources deserve the analogous ‘close reading’ in themselves. Coordinating knowledge from each careful reading of multiple sources generates knowledge of science from knowledge from texts.

B. *All activities involving text require that students demonstrate increasing mastery of evidence drawn from text.* The Common Core Standards require students to become more adept at drawing evidence from the text and explaining that evidence orally and in writing. Aligned materials therefore should include explicit models of what constitutes high quality evidence-based answers to questions—samples of proficient student responses—about specific texts. Questions should require students to demonstrate that they follow the details of what is explicitly stated but also to make non-trivial inferences beyond what is explicitly stated in the text to what logically follows from the evidence in the text.

C. *Questions and tasks require careful comprehension of the text before asking for further critique, evaluation, or interpretation.* The Common Core Standards require that aligned curriculum materials call for students to demonstrate a careful understanding of what they read before engaging their opinions or appraisals. Aligned materials should require students to demonstrate that they have followed the details and logic of an author’s argument before they are asked to evaluate the thesis or compare the thesis to others. Before students are asked to go beyond the text and apply their learning, they should demonstrate their grasp of the specific ideas and details of the text.

4. **Writing and Research that Analyzes Sources and Deploys Evidence:** The Common Core Standards require that students analyze and synthesize sources and present careful analysis, well-defended claims, and clear information.

A. *Extensive practice with short, focused research projects is evident.* Writing Standard 7 emphasizes that students should conduct several short research projects in addition to

more sustained research efforts. Materials should require the repetition of these short research projects—typically taking roughly a week—to enable students to repeat the research process many times and develop the expertise needed to conduct research independently. A progression of shorter research projects can also encourage students to develop expertise in one area by confronting different aspects of the same topic as well as more complex texts and source materials on that topic.

- B. *Writing should focus on writing to inform and writing to make an argument based on evidence.*** Crafting an argument frequently relies on using information; similarly an analysis of a subject will likewise include argumentative elements. While these forms are not strictly independent, what is critical to both forms of writing is the use and integration of evidence. In both historical and scientific writing, accuracy matters, and students should demonstrate their knowledge through precision and detail.