Implementing the Common Core State Standards for Students with Learning Disabilities

Margaret J. McLaughlin, Ph.D., Louisa Moats, Ed.D., and George Batsche, Ed.D.
Implementing the CCSS for Students with Disabilities

Understanding the Context for Students with Disabilities

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What is the “Common Core”?  

• The Common Core State Standards represent something old, something new, some things borrowed…and, I suppose, are making many teachers “blue”

- Educational *equity* became defined in terms of outcomes and closing the achievement gap becomes a national focus (Nation at Risk, Educational Summit, etc.)
- Standards-based reform became the dominant model in education
What is New in the CCSS?

- **Prior State Standards**
  - Provide a map...a goal as well as a direction or route for reaching that goal
  - Variability in how standards were developed
  - Variability in specification of content
  - Variability in rigor across states
  - Standards that were a “mile wide and an inch deep”

- **CCSS**
  - Provide a *coherent and cohesive* map of the critical knowledge and skills needed by young people as they exit the k-12 system
  - Development process was consistent across standards and referenced to international standards as well as other evidence
  - Focus is on *depth and mastery*..not coverage
  - Require every state to “raise its game”
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So, What is New in Math?

• The standards stress not only procedural skill but also conceptual understanding, students can do hands on learning in geometry, algebra and probability and statistics. Standards focus on specific constructs that are central to mathematical thinking, depth of understanding and ability to apply mathematics to novel situations, as college students and employees regularly do.
So, What is New in ELA?

- The reading standards establish a “staircase” of increasing complexity in what students must be able to read and mandate certain critical types of content for all students.
- The cornerstone of the writing standards is ability to write logical arguments based on substantive claims, sound reasoning, and relevant evidence.
Implications of CCSS for Students with Learning (and other) Disabilities

- The CCSS specifies the destinations…but there can be multiple ways to get there
- Our previous research into how teachers interpret and deliver standards is still relevant:
  - Must begin with a shared understanding of where you are going…requires communication, shared focused PD
  - Must have a full and complete understanding of a student’s present level of knowledge … including gaps
Implications of CCSS for Students with Learning (and other) Disabilities

- Must have a deep understanding of learning and skill acquisition in key areas such as mathematics, reading, spelling, writing, etc. (what is “foundational”, what can be “triaged”)
Implications of CCSS for Students with Learning (and other) Disabilities

- Must have a rich and varied tool kit of interventions...and know how and when to apply them
Reconciling the CCSS with Reading, Language, and Writing Research

Louisa Moats, Ed.D.
At the Heart of Student Failure to be College Ready Readers:

Inability to Comprehend Complex Text

It’s not the type of question...

...But the level of text complexity that is the problem
Organization of the CCSS

• Reading
  – Literature (K-5, 6-12)
  – Informational text (K-5, 6-12)
  – Foundational skills (K-5)

• Writing (K-5, 6-12)

• Listening and Speaking (K-5, 6-12)

• Language (K-5, 6-12)
The Goals of Skilled Reading (CCSS)

• **Key Ideas and Details**
  – Read closely to determine what the text says.
  – Determine central ideas or themes; summarize.
  – Analyze where, when, why, and how…

• **Craft and Structure**
  – Interpret words and phrases
  – Analyze the structure of texts
  – Assess point of view
The Goals of Skilled Reading (CCSS)

- Interpretation of Knowledge and Ideas
  - Synthesize and apply information
  - Delineate and evaluate reasoning and rhetoric
  - Integrate information across texts

- Read complex texts, at grade level and above, independently and fluently.
Important Embedded Assumptions in the CCSS Document…

- **“Anchor” standards**: students know how to read with fluency, accuracy, and comprehension
- **“Writing” standards**: students know how to form letters, spell, construct sentences, organize paragraphs, and use conventional grammar
- **“Language” standards** (which pertain mainly to writing): students have acquired oral language foundations
Embedded (And Unverified) Assumptions, continued…

• What is good for older students is good for novice readers
• Foundational skills are relatively easy to teach and acquire
• The field should be directed away from ineffective practices of the past toward better teaching of text comprehension
• Use of more complex, informational texts to teach reading will result in better readers in all grades
Let’s Make a Distinction!

**English Language Arts**
- Literary Criticism
- Text Analysis
- Written Composition

**Learning to Read and Write**
- Word Recognition Fluency
- Vocabulary Comprehension
- Handwriting, Spelling, Sentence Generation
• Approaches that include a strong encoding component are more effective than decoding only (Weiser & Mathes, 2011)

• Systematic, explicit, synthetic methods are effective for “struggling” readers in grades two and three (Blachman et al., 2004)

• Analysis and synthesis of phoneme-grapheme correspondence and syllable spelling patterns facilitate word recognition (Bhattacharya & Ehri, 2004)
• Multi-component programs produce greater gains than single-component programs (Brady, 2011; Fletcher, Denton, et al., 2005)

• Component emphasis should match student profile on phonology, phonics, fluency, language comprehension (Aaron & Joshi, 2010)

• Older poor readers receiving an intense “dose” of structured language teaching progressed in comprehension faster than students focused first and mainly on comprehension (Calhoon, 2005, 2012)

• Teacher-managed, code-focused instruction more effective for average/below average students in grades one and two (Connor et al., 2004, 2007)
Evidence from the Florida Center for Reading Research...

Proportion of variance in FCAT explained by oral reading fluency and verbal comprehension. (Schatschneider et al., 2004)
Do We Have Proven Programs and Practices Already? Yes!
Students with LD Need Instruction with High Quality Texts

• Is there thematic depth?
• Are major genres well sampled?
• Are there provocative, engaging ideas?
• Is there substantive content?
• Does it trigger the imagination?

See Appendix B of the CCSS!
But Don’t Abandon Research-based Instruction of Component Skills!

- English Language Arts
  - Literary Criticism
  - Text Analysis
  - Written Composition

- Learning to Read and Write
  - Word Recognition
  - Fluency
  - Vocabulary
  - Comprehension
  - Handwriting, Spelling, Sentence Generation
Implementing the CCSS for Students with Learning Disabilities Within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports

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Multi-Tiered System of Supports

ACADEMIC and BEHAVIOR SYSTEMS

Tier 3: Intensive, Individualized Interventions & Supports
The most intense (increased time, narrowed focus, reduced group size) instruction and intervention based upon individual student need provided in addition to and aligned with Tier 1 & 2 academic and behavior instruction and supports.

Tier 2: Targeted, Supplemental Interventions & Supports.
More targeted instruction/intervention and supplemental support in addition to and aligned with the core academic and behavior curriculum.

Tier 1: Core, Universal Instruction & Supports.
General academic and behavior instruction and support provided to all students in all settings.

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Basic Issues to Consider

• “Standards Aligned” instruction is not new.
• The CCSS bring new challenges to student performance expectations (student engagement)
• The CCSS bring new challenges to the planning, development and delivery of instruction
• Implementation of CCSS for ALL students is a “Systems-level” issue
Basic Issues to Consider

- The implementation of CCSS has focused primarily on Core or Tier 1 instruction. Less attention has been given to Tier 2 (supplemental) and Tier 3 (intensive) instruction.

- Little or no attention has been given to the *integration* of instruction across tiers for struggling students or to an effective process through which this integration can occur.

- Planning for instruction in a multi-tiered system is a “systems issue” for which the building principal has a critical role.
Critical Questions

• How do we ensure that Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction aligns with the Learning Goals/Standards that are the focus of instruction in Tier 1?

• How do we ensure that the instructional strategies and student engagement skills expected in Tier 1 are incorporated into Tier 2 and Tier 3 instructional planning?
Critical Questions

• How do we ensure that the focus of instruction in Tiers 2 and 3 incorporates CCSS student engagement/performance expectations—critical thinking, reasoning, problem-solving?

• How do we ensure that the supplemental/intensive instructional strategies and specially designed instruction are incorporated into Tier 1 setting?
Final Question

• How do we ensure that all of the providers of instruction (across all Tiers) have their act together so that it is *not the student’s responsibility to integrate instruction across tiers*?
Final Answer!

LESSON STUDY
LESSON PLANNING
Effective Instruction is the Product of Effective Planning

Poor Planning, Poor Instruction
Characteristics of Effective Planning-Tier 1

- All providers of instruction and support are in attendance at the lesson study-general education, remedial education, special education and appropriate related services
  - Question: at YOUR grade level lesson planning meetings, do ALL providers of instruction attend or just the general education teachers?
Characteristics of Effective Planning-Tier 1

- The Learning Goal/Standard/Progression levels is/are identified explicitly

- Instructional strategies (evidence-based) for the goal/level and student skill levels are identified

- The explicit student performance behaviors necessary to engage the instruction are identified—GAPS for individual students identified
Characteristics of Effective Planning-Tier 2/3

- Tier 2/3 providers meet separately to lesson plan their instruction within the context of the Tier 1 lesson study meeting.

- Instructional strategies, engagement behaviors, instructional materials that support student success in Tier 1 are identified.
Characteristics of Effective Planning-Tier 2/3

• Alignment with the scope and sequence/pacing chart for Tier 1 is always a priority when identifying the focus of instruction on a weekly basis.

• This alignment permits a strategic focus for issues such as vocabulary, background knowledge, pre-teaching/review/re-teaching, etc. that results in “just in time” readiness for students to integrate what they have learned into Tier 1.
Characteristics of Effective Planning-Tier 2/3

• Assessments in Tier 2/3 incorporate characteristics of assessments in Tier 1

• The goal here is to not only ensure that students strengthen needed skills and accelerate their growth BUT ALSO to ensure that the students can explicitly identify how the instruction in Tiers 2/3 relates to their work in Tier 1
Characteristics of Effective Planning-Tier 2/3

• Most students with SLD are in the regular classroom at least 290 minutes a day (out of an average of 350).

• Tier 2/3 providers observe their students in the Tier 1 environment to ensure alignment of instruction across Tiers

• Tier 2/3 providers increasingly take an active role in the Tier 1 Lesson Study to share specially designed instructional strategies and student engagement supports during the Tier 1 Lesson Study meetings
Good News/Bad News

• Good News
  – Integrated instruction CAN occur
  – Transfer of learning from Tiers 2/3 to Tier 1 CAN happen at greater levels
  – Students CAN become active partners in this integration process IF they see the integration

• Bad News 😊
  – This takes time to do well
  – Adults have to play well together
  – Check egos at the door! Everyone is a critical player here
Thank you!

For more information, visit RTInetwork.org and/or email us at info@RTInetwork.org