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TIDBITS

tips and helpful links

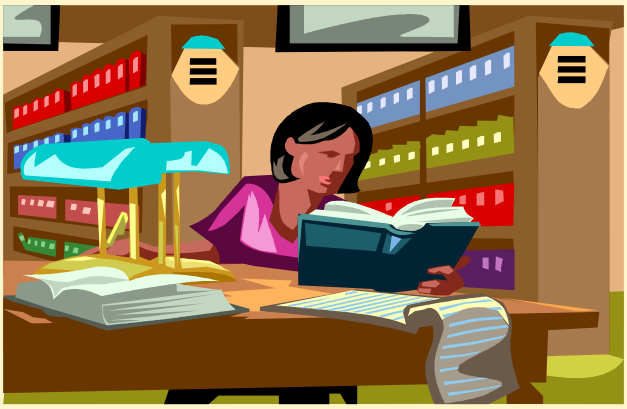
English Language Arts

Upper elementary and middle school students who can't read fluently find themselves stuck in a cycle. Since they can't read they don't like to read. When they have to read, they find it laborious and unsatisfying. They are unfamiliar with vocabulary, sentence structure, and text organization. Their comprehension skills decline over time from lack of reading while spelling and writing skills suffer as well. So what began as a core phonological and word recognition deficit becomes a much larger debilitating problem with language – both spoken and written. Early intervention with emphasis on the development of phonological awareness impacts spelling, vocabulary, and word recognition. Once students are decoding, shifting the focus to vocabulary development, comprehension strategies, and fluency is essential so that students can derive meaning from increasingly complex texts. Remember that writers learn best from reading. Regular exposure to quality fiction and non-fiction texts will provide models for student work. Students should not bypass any of these critical skills necessary for fluent and meaningful reading just because of chronological age – these challenges can be met in age-appropriate ways in interwoven curricular strands that progress along a developmental sequence…

Source: When Older Students Can't Read By: Louisa Moats (2002)
For more detailed information on working with older students with reading difficulties, visit: http://www.ldonline.org/article/When_Older_Students_Can%27t_Read

Vocabulary

Word Generation is a great site for creating a systematic method of introducing academic vocabulary to students in middle school. It's designed to complement the Common Core ELA goal of shared accountability among teachers for reading proficiency – students get multiple exposures to the target vocabulary in different contexts throughout the week. It's free to schools and districts.
http://wg.serpmedia.org/register.html



Listening and Speaking

Listening and speaking are part of the new AZ Common Core State Standards. As early as kindergarten students will be learning how to have collaborative conversations and learn to ask for help on grade level appropriate topics. Older students will learn how to formulate forceful and fortified arguments that have been well-researched. Listening and speaking standards will guide students' collaborative interactions with peers, helping them to make intelligent contributions as members of teams. These skills will be assessed but not used in the determination of the summative score. Teachers will score the speaking and listening skills of their students using a standardized rubric. These shifts in literacy instruction will better prepare our students who are heading toward rigorous college work and beyond in the workplace.
Coming Together to Raise Achievement: New Assessments for the ...
k-12center.org/.../ Assessments_for_the_Common_Core_Standards_J...

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The following excerpt from the February issue of the PARCC Place newsletter provides some suggestions for classroom teachers and schools in how to use the Model Content Frameworks in planning AZ 2010 ELA instruction…

Using the Model Content Frameworks for ELA/Literacy

The Model Content Frameworks for ELA/Literacy were written primarily to help "frame" or structure the PARCC assessments. In both the introduction and the grade level frameworks, key understandings of the CCSS are elucidated, to guide the design of the assessments. These frameworks also should help those developing curricula to envision one means to structure an annual course of study for each year, in grades 3-11.

So, why read the frameworks as a classroom teacher or building administrator? There are several ways school-based staff can use the frameworks as they move to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

First, each framework provides additional clarity around key terms and ideas in the CCSS. As teachers begin to implement the CCSS, those working collaboratively to provide instruction can discuss these key terms and ideas and how best to instruct students in the CCSS. In building a shared understanding of the CCSS across a school community, staff can more readily communicate critical concepts with clarity and consistency.

Another way the frameworks can support school-based implementation of the CCSS is through helping staff articulate shifts in instructional responsibilities from year to year based on the clear annual shifts in the CCSS. For example, the ELA/Literacy frameworks provide tables making clear the yearly shifts in writing standards. Explicit discussions between teams of teachers at a school about these shifts and how to manage them could prove very productive in ensuring that learning progressions from year to year are purposefully efficient to encourage growth in student achievement.

There are a myriad of ways schools can use the frameworks to foster dialogue and discussion about teaching and learning. As your school implements the CCSS, PARCC would like to share your success stories with others. If you have a story or hint you believe would help other educators as they work to implement the CCSS, send your response to CCSSintheclassroom@achieve.org. Look for the best of these stories and hints in coming months to appear here in the PARCC newsletter and in the "In Our Own Words" column on www.parcconline.org.

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Graphic Organizing Tools

Using graphic organizers throughout the writing process helps students generate ideas and keep them organized. It provides them with a visual of the entire process – start to finish. For very young students or those with poor writing skills, brainstorming by drawing ideas gets them started. Encourage highly detailed drawings which will help flesh out their writing with details later on. As you teach the writing process, be sure to model with think alouds to illustrate your thought processes as you develop your piece. Once you've modeled and provided sufficient practice, incorporate the new skill into a rubric for subsequent writing projects. In this way skills are increasingly refined with each project. Provide enough scaffolding so that your struggling writers experience success as well. When used effectively, graphic organizers help facilitate the traits of organization, ideas, sentence fluency, and conventions. As these become part of a routine, the opportunity for more creativity with voice and word choice will emerge, giving students' work a more personalized dynamic. For examples of graphic organizers, visit the following sites:

West Virginia Department of Education

www.angelfire.com/wi/**writing**process/specificgos.html

Text Complexity

Text complexity is one of the most significant changes in the new AZ ELA standards. How will teachers decide what texts to use and how to guide students through the unfamiliar academic language and the density of information? How will students with special needs access this challenging curriculum? These are some of the issues considered by Lily Wong Fillmore from UC Berkeley: http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/72/CGCS_Wed.pdf

For examples and suggestions of complex texts by grade level, see Appendix B in the AZ ELA standards: Click here.

For information on establishing text complexity: Click here.

Access to Books:

Check out Bookshare, a web-based library for people with disabilities. This site provides unlimited access to books and periodicals that can be converted to Braille, large print, or synthetic speech. Textbooks, best sellers, and children's literature comprise the more than 50,000 books available. Qualified disabled students have free access, funded by an award from the US Dept. of Education.

http://www.benetech.org/literacy/bookshare.shtml

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